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Organised Teachers and the Labour Movement 1900-1930

Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Faculty of Educational Studies

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ABSTRACT

Organised Teachers and the Labour Movement 1900-1930

This case study of organised teachers falls into three main parts. In the first section there is a discussion of the working conditions and problems of teaching which is followed by detailed histories of strikes in West Ham, Herefordshire and the Rhondda. These took place in the period between 1900 and 1919 and illustrate the build-up of tension between teachers and their employers culminating in the salaries campaign of 1916 to 1919. Strikes and disputes reveal in speeches, letters or articles the tensions which the teachers faced working in the education system and possible ways of resolving them.

The second part of the study is concerned with ideas which influenced teachers in trying to solve the contradictions of work and solutions generated by the Board of Education in devising a reconstructed system of State education. Teachers adopted or redefined various socialist strands of thought common in the first two decades of the century, in particular Fabianism, guild socialism and syndicalism and were influenced by practical examples of socialist reconstruction proposed by the Independent Labour Party or Trade Councils. Strongly expressed definitions of duty and the responsibility of teachers to the State promoted, among others, by H.A.L. Fisher were also attempting to influence teachers.

In the last section, newly formulated teacher demands for self-government were opposed by a strong counter-attack from the Treasury and from the Board of Education on the teachers, which in turn, encouraged many local education authorities to break a national pay agreement and

return to pre-war working conditions. Bitter strikes were fought with the help of a weakened Labour movement and a divided teaching force.

The case study is an argument for generating new theoretical categories to understand or examine teachers and opposes the theoretical straitjacket commonly applied to teachers, drawn from social mobility theory or neo-Marxism.



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## INTRODUCTION

This thesis is an historical case study of teachers in elementary schools in the early part of this century in England and Wales. It is an attempt to retrieve or reconstruct their points of view on the economic or political condition of the education system and the wider social milieu in which they lived.

The term 'education system' was not widely used at the turn of the century but it is used in the study to allow the exploration and articulation of the particular school with its rural or urban administration and the Board of Education. This is explored through the letters, notes, recorded conversations, speeches, meetings or petitions of the elementary teachers and their employers and relies substantially on newspaper and journal sources to isolate the problems and arguments within the ranks of organised teachers and the varied responses of their employers or managers. 'Organised teachers' means the teachers within the National Union of Teachers which was the major teachers' organisation in this period but the term also includes local Class Teachers' associations which included Union and non-Union members. The latter were ineligible for Union membership due to their lack of certification.

The teachers' point of view is a phrase deliberately used because it suggests that either little is known about the thoughts and actions of elementary teachers or that existing material does not adequately reflect the ideas and feelings of the teachers themselves. Without making detailed reference to existing studies of teachers, such as they are at this stage a short comment is due on the emphasis placed here on the teachers' point of view. It is the view of the writer that

teachers have been 'hidden from (the) history' of education. Perhaps the genesis of this field of study depended overmuch on the memoirs of educational administrators or the large-scale narratives constructed for college courses, and in its early maturity then developed into a series of detailed local case studies. This is an unjust review of the development of history of education yet throughout, with four exceptions, teachers have been portrayed as shadows, flitting through the substantial business of establishing and running schools, Cabinet intrigues and noting progress. It would be a digression here to analyse why teachers seem to lack a substantial presence in the recorded development of education yet there is another linked problem which does need explanation. When teachers appeared certain key concepts became linked to their actions - a rough guide would include 'professionalism', 'status', 'responsibility', 'autonomy' and lastly, 'partnership'. It is not then just a question of making shadows substance that is a problem for this study but of revealing the way in which these key terms bear any theoretical weight or meaning for the teachers in the period studied. Recording the points of view of teachers allows the concepts to live in the teachers' own arguments and consciousness, to develop tensions and contradictions and to show the way they are historically rooted. The 'common-sense' nature of their use, their lack of specificity and ahistorical nature will be thrown into relief throughout the case study.

When this study was first envisaged, the writer had just completed a period as a schoolteacher in a London comprehensive during a time of considerable teacher unrest in a pay struggle involving half-day strikes and public demonstrations. The world of the teacher seen through this experience and a socialist outlook common to many teachers of the same political and cultural generation, was seen as one of

activism, educational innovation and bitter internal debate. Yet this was not reflected in the background reading in the history of education at all, though elements of this world view were surfacing in the new sociology of education. What was common to the history and sociology of education was the monopolisation of explanations as to teacher behaviour by the idea of professionalism and professionalisation. The concept, as used in the two fields of study, seemed to imply the very antithesis of the world view, common to many young London teachers at the time, of class struggle and educational activism. The case was clear - what was needed was a study of teachers that would oppose the theoretical explanations offered under 'professionalism' by revealing the alternative, hidden, undiscovered realities which must have existed. Very soon, following clues in odd footnotes, these alternative realities began to surface. However, part-time doctoral studies are great consumers of years and recorders of changes in their producers. In this case, clear views on 'professionalism' and the act of securing and interpreting evidence altered. Conversations with teachers and the study of contemporary letters and speeches confused the writer. Professionalism did not appear to be always the antithesis of other categories, such as 'union' or 'worker'. Indeed, it seemed to vary considerably in meaning. In one specific use of the word, it appeared as necessary to the description of service in the public sector and denoted responsibility towards (say) education against the views and actions of the employer. With this new complexity came a loss of certainty as to the purpose of the study. This was resolved by a decision to record as fully as possible the points of view of the teachers at the time. It was not to be a question of uncovering little known facts or interpreting strongly that which was available but instead a naturalistic task - recording and exploring the contradictions

that the teachers experienced as a group as fully as possible. The move from a partisan to a naturalistic approach was easier than it might appear as during the course of the study the earlier writer became a stranger to the later writer, and the latter worked in a period when the substantial part of the study was completed and the whole re-written and re-interpreted. As a footnote to the writing of this study might be added the thought that history-writing should not use the metaphor of the mirror to describe its work. The process of selection and a particular way of seeing, made up of cultural and ideological predispositions and subjectivism, makes for the use of a more apt metaphor of painting. Even a naturalistic record in its emphasis on particular interludes or crucial events may underline them unduly, and in the presentation of a seamless narrative may force out the untidy insight. It is also true that material recorded here, and I think of the 'men teachers for boys' debate in the final chapter, may have been inadequately expressed by a writer unable to enter into and do justice to the view expressed.

Simple questions shaped this study. What was it like to be teacher then? In what sense can one talk of group identities (the elementary teacher) or contradictions among teachers isolated geographically, politically and socially from each other? Was education seen by them as a cohesive and separate enterprise or inextricably interwoven with wider social and political questions? Although the quest for false consciousness among teachers and historical commentators was now laid aside, partisanship was still at work. Collecting points of view renewed the writer as partisan - a protagonist for teachers, a champion of their place in the struggle for education and recorder of their organic links with Labour. It was not a question of proving that they were

really workers but of making certain that those of them who believed this and acted upon it should be placed in a central position in the history of organised teachers and of education in this period. This central position is a reflection upon the recognition given at the time among their own colleagues and their employers of the significance of their ideas and actions.

The literature relating to teachers in England and Wales is a mixed bag, written for different audiences at different times. The major reference work is still Asher Tropp's 'The Schoolteachers' published in 1957 as the result of research carried out in the early 1950's. This work is vitally important in studying teachers as its attitudes and the shaping of its historical narrative continue to influence ways of seeing teachers in related areas of education, such as the sociology of education and educational administration.

Tropp argues that teachers, as a coherent group, had become a profession and implies that they were practically self-governing and free from state control (though in a kind of partnership with local and central government). Each step in the teachers' development - training requirements, school layout and resources, Education Acts, salary improvement - is contrasted with an earlier period and every new decade is 'proof' of the progress of the system and the teachers within it. History is seen in a Darwinian light and Tropp reveals the progression of teachers from servants to professionals. Tropp may have believed in the gradual improvement of society by the middle class and their non-political arguments, dressed up as professionalism, but other perspectives use his evidence of teacher professionalism to promote opposed ideas, on teachers' anti-working class actions, fruitless striving for status and lack of antagonism towards the State.

Tropp's essential position is encapsulated in the following quotation.

"It [the profession] was created by the State and in the nineteenth century the State was powerful enough to claim almost complete control over the teacher and to manipulate his status while at the same time disclaiming all responsibility towards him. Slowly, and as the result of prolonged effort, the organised profession has won free and has reached a position of self-government and independence..."<sup>1</sup>

The story is one in which the teacher achieves a degree of independence from the State. It begs several questions - did the State become less powerful in the 20th Century? What was the nature of the prolonged effort and did other groups of workers use it to effect a break from the State? What degree of freedom and self-government have teachers got and did the State give them this willingly or unwillingly? Tropp in the two-thirds of his book concerned with post-1870, tries to show this new degree of freedom by illustrating from (and depending a great deal upon) the reports and journal of the National Union of Teachers. The NUT was the main body of certificated teachers, from 1870, although the proportion of certificated to various other kinds of teachers shrank rapidly in this period. Tropp did not define professionalism. It was a self-evident concept and he based his usage on the way the NUT, in its aims and debates, used the term. The teachers had been chosen by Tropp as part of a London School of Economics series of investigations into the growth of professions and the study of social mobility. Professionalism and upward social mobility were intertwined in the study and generated a theoretical hybrid (which was also known in the U.S.A.), professionalisation - the process of becoming a profession. Again, teachers had been chosen because they were 'one of the main channels of social mobility between the working and middle classes'.

The confusion of terms continues in the study. Teachers are seen as 'an occupational group' -

"each occupational group has intervened to promote its own particular interest rather than as part of a 'class'".<sup>2</sup>

So, occupational groups can be made up of members of a particular social class (working or middle class) yet they act separately from this class while pursuing interests, derived presumably from their occupation. This division of occupational interests from class interests is confused by also using the term, middle class, to apply to teachers

•[They are part of] "middle class groups participat[ing] in the struggle of interest groups inside Parliament and inside the main political parties".<sup>3</sup>

Teachers in their occupational group, part of the middle class, protected their own interests as a group in alliance with other groups - sometimes 'working class groups' or sometimes 'doctors, dentists, nurses, engineers' etc. These alliances were specifically to help attain their interests and were 'non-party' and 'non-political'.

Tropp's statement of theoretical position is confused within itself and yet determines strongly the historical narrative he wrote. Are the middle class non-political as a class or just the occupational groups which make it up? What makes up a class - is it only occupations, or attitudes, ideology or culture? Did the technical specialisation of the occupational groups mean that they were part of the State? If they were, would this explain the non-political alliances or State granted independence?

The problem rests on one major ideological position, that teachers are a cohesive group, able to act consistently, over many decades, to achieve aims that the National Union of Teachers was founded upon. Each teacher is part of a collective identity. That identity was capable of acting to achieve its aims unsullied by politics or



political alliances or industrial or social ferment. The identity was created within an education service that did not alter fundamentally except that once it was controlled by the State and then, generally, by teachers. Like teachers and the wider society, education itself remained static. To borrow an illuminating phrase from elsewhere, Tropp was describing an orrery, a mechanical model of a known universe.<sup>4</sup> No wonder that the teachers' vocabulary is never under scrutiny, nor their actions or 'alliances'. It is not necessary. Teachers were illustrating, to Tropp, a known universe of occupational groups, professions, classes and social mobility he already was aware of but lacked the detail. In a very serious sense, Tropp was illustrating a sociological thesis on class, mobility and occupational groups, and this affects the kinds of information and debates he addresses. What it should not have done is affected the debates as addressed by others.

In a similar discussion on teachers, Parry and Parry use the same key idea, the use of professionalism as an occupational strategy, though they come to rather different conclusions. Professionalism is, for them, a strategy for controlling an occupation by regulating entry into it and influencing members' conduct within it. To illustrate this strategy they analysed the professional registration of teachers, the Teachers' Registration Movement, to show how teachers used professionalism to control their occupation; the Teachers' Registration Movement aimed at 'creating a unified and self-governing profession'. Like Tropp, they make associations between social class and occupational strategy -

"Professionalism is an ideology of the middle class and has been practised as an occupational strategy; it is a vehicle for upward collective social mobility."<sup>5</sup>

Again, professionalism is a conscious expression of a collective identity, undertaken over decades, with the main aim to move social class. In many ways, this is a remaking of the Tropp orrery

There is one significant substantive difference between these two views of professionalism as an occupational strategy. In Parry and Parry's model, the strategy is resisted, it fails. Firstly, because the middle class resent the would-be entryists. Secondly, the strategy needs State support or at least, State acquiescence, in the process. In their view it was the fact that the State monopolised control over entry into teaching that would make it opposed to the strategy.

In both views there is theoretical unease and some discrepancies. Tropp talks of the working class and teacher alliances, though these were tactical only, or of the social unrest among the teachers, though this only 'corresponded' to unrest among industrial workers. Parry and Parry mention that a working class alliance was viewed 'positively' by some teachers. It is clear that the prior questions of a middle-class entryist strategy precludes the writers from seeing alliances or unrest as anything other than aberrations in the development of autonomy. Both Tropp and Parry and Parry do talk of 'unionism' but within a dichotomy, at an opposite pole to professionalism. It represents a different order of existence, an incidental lower-order response to questions of employment, nearer to the manual trades. It is the result of the failure of the occupational strategy or again, an aberration within it.

Judging evidence and placing it on either side of the dichotomy between professionalism and unionism did not stop Donna Thompson from describing the NUT as 'resembling' a trade union. Again, the substance of the question is avoided - it 'resembles' but it is not one. What is the distinction? To Thompson, the difference is in the 'professional spirit' of the NUT, for instance 'the dignified way it has conducted its affairs even when using the strike weapon'.<sup>6</sup>

This 'professional spirit' allows Thompson to fill a great deal of space in her book describing the labour alliances that the teachers considered or the strikes that they fought. The 'spirit' was altruism. Teachers recognised that if they won a battle for better conditions then this was a victory for the general public - it improved the schooling for the public's children. Quoting from early NUT Presidential addresses on professionalism and education she weaves together the teachers' interests and the 'progress of civilization' into the professional spirit. But while strikes are fine because they are altruistic, labour alliances are unprofessional. Thompson does allow a more significant role for the teachers' class background - teachers were part of the manual labouring class because they worked in a system of poor pay and conditions and it was not surprising that a 'feeble class consciousness' was developing. Indeed although she never makes a direct reference, Thompson allows the parallel between professionalism and traditional craft union strategies; both are concerned with controlling entry, against skill dilution and reducing outside interference. Even her insistence that the Union be free of political party ties is not dissimilar to the craft union approach.

The dichotomy is emphasised by Beatrice Webb in an essay on teacher organisation published in 1915. Webb sees the NUT as a trade union, created in response to the 'payment by results' system and the power of school managers. Like the manual trade unions, the NUT used collective bargaining (with a strike alternative) and mutual insurance. The professional 'spirit' Webb tends to regard as a

"manifestation of a professional egoism in the teacher which tends to impair the social value of his service"<sup>7</sup>

She saw the NUT as 'approximating to a Trade Union', for all its declarations of professional dignity and as part of a wage-earning class. Like Thompson, Webb saw the connection between the teachers' self-interest and the quality of the education service. In her major treatise on Trade Unions, written with Sydney Webb eighteen years previously (The New Industrial Democracy, Longmans 1901), Beatrice Webb argued that trade unions would become more like the NUT. It was not a question of social class entryism she had in mind but the gradual rise in competency in the occupation, which she described as a craft. Again, there is a way of looking at the teachers' organisation that allows the reader more than alternation between the opposites of a dichotomy. It is not so much disagreement about what happened, more about its interpretation. If Webb and Thompson, in the early years of the century, saw elements or ambiguities or parallels in the teachers' organisation, is it a reflection of mid-century sociological norms (of occupational strategies and social mobility) that these points were eliminated?

What is tentative in our observers is the nature of the pressure exerted by the teachers. Thompson saw the chief method of work as 'deputations and memorials' to the Board and Parliament; Webb talked of the effectiveness of the Legal Department of the NUT and its one successful strike; Tropp emphasised deputations and consultation over collective bargaining. To Webb, in 1915, direct action by the Union was being subordinated to indirect pressure (deputations etc.). This is interpreted by observers as a move toward professionalism and away from unionism, as evidence for an interest group strategy and away from collective bargaining. But in two major areas in which teachers deal with employers, pay and control over entry into teaching, Webb, Parry and Parry, Thompson, and in the main, Tropp, see little real improvement having been made. This raises the point then, that either

teacher pressure is ineffective, effective in certain licensed areas or that a move to deputations etc. is a sign of an intra-union movement (not a positive professional move).

Other writers have discussed the traditional methods of NUT 'pressure'; Coates<sup>8</sup> refers to traditional strategies (lobbying, contacts, and mass media influence) and Burke<sup>9</sup> to traditional practice (arguments and campaigns). Burke echoes Tropp in his sense of historical observation when teachers may have operated in other ways, 'desperate situations' produced 'desperate measures'. The desperate situation is that which Tropp saw as similar to industrial unrest - the period before and after the first World War. From the perspective of the 1960's and 1970's this period may appear to teacher observers as a different historical interlude but there is a rather more important question to resolve. How can theories of teacher collective identity be produced which lack any sense of struggle, tension or contradictions between various courses of action, and why is the history of teachers' organisation a sufferer from a priorism of such magnitude that any action, however isolated or widespread, is lost to explanation and seen only as 'desperate' or non-traditional?

The writers mentioned share certain explanatory modes in their description of teachers' organisation. The most important is the static nature of the analysis. Categories are immutable - teachers, class, and professionalism; their strategies are consistent - upward, coherent and class-based. Pressure is exerted by deputation, lobbying and argument. The relations between the teachers and the State, bound by 'pressure' and 'status', concentrated on pay, conditions and control over entry, and revolved slowly, gradually revealing the relative autonomy of the movement of the teachers and the withdrawal of the State. Initially, dissatisfaction as to the complete vision offered left a sense of unease lacking any historical evidence to substantiate

alternative theories of causation. Odd footnotes in Tropp on early strikes or withdrawals (Portsmouth and West Ham) or a move to affiliation with the Labour Party led to a search for more detail which, in the first instance, Thompson supplied in a narrative of the Herefordshire strike and the move to Labour affiliation which used NUT documents in greater detail than Tropp. Having no obligation to theories of upward social mobility and occupational strategy, the writer also lost interest in professionalism, except in an oppositional sense, seeing this as a straitjacket which, once discarded, would release the 'truth' beneath. 'Truth' lay in the direction of the teachers as members of the working class, not by birth, but by the fact of their wage-earning status and their actions viz. strikes.

Not until later did professionalism re-emerge as an organising category in the study, from wider reading in primary documents, the term reappeared with a number of possible meanings, varying from period to period, context to context. The same word was used differently, implying very different ideas according to who used it and in what debate. In one sense of the word, elements of Webb and Thompson's thoughts were apparently confirmed. It could be used, not in a dichotomy between it and unionism, but as a particular description of a kind of unionism. In this sense, professionalism began to appear as descriptive of a sort of craft union approach - elitist, restricted, skill-based and conservative. Yet in other senses it seemed very close to an ideology of state servanthood - quiescent and apolitical. A term that became more confusing, not less, was social class. Who was the middle class and how could teachers see and aspire to membership of it so clearly? The immutability of class in the sense created by the 'occupational strategists' placed a theoretical straitjacket on understanding the actions of the teachers.

Finn, Grant and Johnson turned the emphases of occupational sociology into a consistent ideological and political expression of teachers' class location. The behaviour of the teachers became explicable when their class position was examined. Although they agreed that teachers were wage-earners, they were 'unproductive' labourers because schools do not produce surplus value. This technical elimination of teachers from the ranks of the working class was completed on ideological grounds. Finn, Grant and Johnson argued that teachers have always distinguished themselves from manual workers by means of their self-definition as professionals. Professionalism was a way of making that necessary distinction -

"Teachers and their organisations have emphasised (with fatal continuity) their professional status, the mental-manual labour divide, their distance from parentdom.... so that teaching has been ideologically constructed to emphasise differences from the working class".<sup>10</sup>

Again, though this time without supporting evidence, teachers have been represented as a cohesive group, acting over time, with a single aim, consistent in definition. A new reason is introduced. Instead of a marginal relation to the working class, as in Tropp, these teachers have deliberately created an ideology of work which was in opposition to the manual working class. Again, their 'petit-bourgeois' strategy, in defending their middle class position or becoming part of the middle class, (this version holds both these possibilities) is founded on immutable notions of class. There is a middle class, a manual working class and 'petit-bourgeoise', though the latter is identified with the first class. These two classes remain in perpetual division, enmity or mutual isolation throughout the century. What is still unclear is the role of the State - how did the teachers, ideologically constructing themselves, manage to convince the State to give them autonomy and freedom from interference, or did they just think they had been given

autonomy (both versions of this question can be sustained from Finn, Grant and Johnson's thesis). In a later related paper, professionalism is seen as a 'means of asserting self-respect' and 'collective solidarity' against the State.<sup>11</sup> It seems to have worked as, they argue, teachers achieved a measure of self-government in return for their good behaviour and a definition of their area of competence. In a further point, an alliance between teachers and the Labour Party is mentioned, as both groups, for their own reasons want an egalitarian or unified education system.

'Tropp's thesis is reworked and although new elements are introduced, such as ambiguous class membership, his thesis remains intact. Teachers used a professional strategy which involved tactical alliances, for aims which suited them, and in this case, with Labour; they also either achieved or were defending middle class status or were petit bourgeoisie, (although there is some confusion it looks generally like a reaffirmation of Tropp) and finally, the State had given them a degree of autonomy (though whether real or conditional is not clear). There is a shared attitude - teachers are capable of constructing their political, social and educational world for themselves as a conscious, deliberate, cohesive act.

The point which is introduced and then discarded in favour of ideological factors, is that of the teachers' shared economic position with the rest of the wage earning class. This element of economic determination of class identity being overridden by ideological position that are not imposed on teachers but constructed by themselves deserves further consideration.

The notion of ambiguous class position is contained explicitly within the Finn, Grant and Johnson position and is implicitly present in the work of Webb and Thompson. These observers recognise the



congruency of teachers' and workers' economic positions - they are wage-earners selling their labour power to sustain themselves, having no other asset. What is a complicating factor is what may be called the ideological factor by some or the professional spirit by others. Something other than economic position determines their class position or becomes an overriding factor in determining it.

What is the economic position of teachers? Thompson and Webb refer to the conditions of work, compulsory overtime, poor pay and diluted skills as evidence of the exploited position of teachers which they were organising to change. It is these factors which are regarded as dominant by Beatrice Webb in making teachers operate in similar ways to other workers. Sometimes reference is made to their social class background or even the social class of their clients in schools but neither is as obvious to the contemporary observer as the physical and financial condition of the teacher. In recent years one teachers' organisation, the Teachers' Action Collective, took the problem of economic determination of teachers' class position and argued that "schools were commodity-producing factories equivalent to any other factory in the capitalist economy".<sup>12</sup> The commodity is an enhanced labour-power, produced by the education system, in the grading of its students. Education is not a homogenous concept, then, it is divided into a use-value and an exchange-value. Use-value is an element within education, sometimes referred to as 'education for its own sake', which does not have to be exchanged to continue existence; it is personal and is a matter of individual gratification. The school system is overwhelmingly concerned with exchange-value; the Teachers' Action Collective argue that

"the teacher produces a trained skilled, disciplined labour force which is exchanged against capital not only to reproduce the value of that labour power but to produce a surplus value."<sup>13</sup>

The surplus value in this case is that area in the transaction between the cost of education (fixed and variable costs such as plant, salaries etc.) and the productive value received from the system - that is, the skilled labour force.

This argument, about the relationship of schooling to capitalism, hinges on the question of surplus value production and the creation of a skilled labour force. It is an argument used by some teachers in the study, such as W.G. Cove - referring to the cuts imposed by the Geddes Report (the Committee on National Expenditure in 1921), he said

"[we are in an] economic struggle of the nations and in that struggle power will be forged in the schools and laboratories of the nation... [expenditure on education] is productive expenditure and will become the very source of our national income"<sup>14</sup>

It is no surprise that Cove also argued that teachers were productive workers yet here he is explaining, in his terms, to the capitalist the need for an education system. This irony suggests that there is more than one purpose to which an education system is put and that the capitalist State is not monolithic - there are a number of aims, varying from period to period, group to group, which are available to meet its needs, dependent on the need or crisis to be resolved.

It has been mentioned that there is an ideological construction to the teachers' work. It is not just a question of producing skills but of attitudes and social values. It is this element which is seen to be central to the ambiguity of class position. Observers connect the ideological work of schools to the creation of a class of workers, trained to operate this task and subscribing to its aims. Finn, Grant and Johnson make passing reference to a writer, Poulantzas who in his

original work, and a later revision by Olin Wright, takes the question of class ambiguity as his main text.

Poulantzas describes a group of workers, the petty bourgeoisie, who are separated from the productive working class, economically, politically and ideologically.<sup>15</sup> Teachers are part of this petty bourgeoisie - they are part of State apparatuses, ensuring the domination and control of the working class in their supervisory roles and with their expert knowledge. Education, as part of the ideological State apparatus, both reproduces the labour force and indoctrinates the working class with the attitudes necessary for the reproduction of capitalism. The position of the petit bourgeois is not homogenous - they are fragmented and fractionalised, and may even form alliances with the working class, especially when their state-bred ideology of social justice or 'equality of opportunity' is contradicted by the actions of the State. Yet, for Poulantzas, alliances with the working class "do not challenge the reproduction of the social division of labour within the State apparatus",<sup>16</sup> now does it create a fundamentally new ideological outlook. Olin Wright<sup>17</sup> affirms Poulantzas' main thesis and goes further - teachers are caught between different classes; economically between the working class and the petit bourgeoisie and ideologically, between the bourgeoisie and the working class. Their limbo is permanent, although they may appear to be proletarianized economically, they are agents of ideological reproduction.

This permanent contradiction between an objective economic position and an ideological role is shared by other neo-Marxist sociologists of education in their analyses of schooling and teachers' work. It is also a recurring factor in some of the teachers' own discussions in the study. Like Poulantzas and Olin Wright, they, too are Marxists, but unlike them, feel that the contradiction is not

permanent - it can be struggled against. A Labour alliance can be formed and classroom practice can be transformed. In other words, this is not a permanent limbo nor is there an antagonistic contradiction between the working class and themselves. The difference then is that they did not recognise static class boundaries nor permanent ambiguity. Class action and struggle is permanent, not class boundaries. The Teachers' Labour League could adopt the general proposition that teachers were agents of capitalism yet still feel it was possible to be a teacher, organised and able to struggle to alter the proposition. A socialist practice for education is raised in the study within different ways - an educational guild socialism, strike schools, a socialist curriculum or in Labour Party/TUC educational policies.

This review of the literature on teachers reveals the theoretical straitjackets in which they are held. My study attempts to identify the feelings and opinions of the teachers themselves as they experienced a period of intense social, political and educational change. The evidence uncovered by my study raises questions about some of the conclusions reached by the authors discussed above. I have tried to discuss some of the major questions in the text itself and in the conclusion.

The study is organised into three main areas, corresponding to movements which emerge in the period between 1900 and 1930. The first section is preceded by a discussion of the condition, problems and employer relations felt by most elementary teachers at the turn of the century. From 1900 to 1920, there was a gradual built-up of unrest among these teachers, based on the extreme financial and social pressure that they felt themselves to be under. The local strike in West Ham (Chapter 2) was followed by the Herefordshire strike (Chapter 3) and the start of the salary campaign. Two of the major disputes in this campaign are described (Chapters 4 and 5). Although these strikes are

described in detail it is not just the local attitudes among the employers and employed that are revealed but a general sense of change and tension that is openly discussed by the teachers. The period between West Ham (1907) and the Rhondda (1919) is also one of strong social unrest that preceded the war and rose in a new form during it. These two strikes, at each end of a remarkable phase of the teachers' history, are very different in the views and actions taken by the teachers and the incorporation of Labour movement contacts and socialist ideas and examples into their own arguments. Progress was uneven and the correspondence, minutes and reviews associated with the local authority disputes in local newspapers, NUT Reports, the Schoolmaster, national newspapers, contemporary observers and branch reports suggest that a significant change was occurring in the attitudes of teachers and employers to each other but ability to act on these attitudes varied from place to place.

The second major section is concerned with political ideas and national questions raised by or for the teachers. The changing relations with employers was articulated by the use of syndicalist, guild socialist or collectivist ideas taken from, or in conjunction with, trade unions, the Independent Labour Party and socialist organisations (Chapter 7). These items were grafted on to or redefined central problems for the teachers, associated with the working class education system, the teachers as workers within it and the power of the employing local authorities (Chapter 8). This articulation of possible new identities and ways of acting was not carried out only among the teachers but by the wider Labour movement, spurred by the prospect of power and the needs of reconstruction. Generated from elsewhere was a revitalised definition of duty and responsibility within a national

educational system. Arguments about new necessities in the education system involved contemporary politicians (Fisher, Haldane and Lloyd George, for instance) in devising, with the support of the Times, an educational 'social contract', a pact between the teachers and the State. The necessity of a pact involved a rejection of options, such as civil servant status, and the creation of a new professionalism (Chapter 6).

The third section is congruent with a recognised period of nationwide counter-attacks by the employers (from 1921 to 1930) with a twofold aim of reducing expenditure and (the necessity of) diminishing union power. Teachers at their point of victory (the Burnham Settlement) and with newly-generated demands for self-government and with strong Labour allies, found that the reaction threatened to sweep their prize away (Chapter 9). A number of bitter, long strikes were fought in several areas to defend the new pay scales. Instead of a tightly-drawn Labour alliance, teachers found themselves and their allies in disarray. Left-wing teachers were purged from teaching and a new encouragement of patriotic schooling threatened to remove many others (Chapter 10). The movement to Labour became as divided as the Labour movement itself. A teachers' pressure group to influence Labour policy, the Teachers' Labour League, became a radical agency of socialist educational ideas and was purged from the Labour Party and increasingly influenced by Communist teachers (a party that was expelled at the same time) (Chapter 11). Not only were there political divisions but a new industrial, single-union identity, created in 1919, had solved the problem of skilled and unskilled teachers in rivalry but created bitter sex divisions, fought with gender arguments in separate associations soon to secede from the Union (Chapter 12).

The impression that is created within these chapters, analysed in the concluding section, is that teaching was not a separate occupation, with its own selfish strategies, in an insular educational world, but part of the rhythm of social change and conflict that was altering the nation. New ideas reflecting socialist theories took root in teaching sustained by local or individual alliances with socialist workers and representatives. These ideas were expressed sometimes in a vocabulary common to other State white collar employees, and were opposed by similar-sounding but very different ideas generated by employers. With economic downturn and a political reaction, breaks occurred in these alliances and oppositional cultures, divisions emerged among the teachers and socialist ideas were isolated in the trade unions as was the case with most working class organisations. The Labour movement itself became deeply divided.

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PART ONE

1: DIVIDED TEACHERS, WORKING CONDITIONS AND CRAFT UNIONISM

In 1900, teachers were divided from each other by geography, qualifications, pay, sex and educational location. The National Union of Teachers represented only one section whose membership, in this year, was mainly male and certificated. The others were unorganised. The education system, locally organised with powerful managers, and a state agency, the Department of Education, was, in the main, hostile to the teachers. They were seen as servants, with a parallel attitude to pay, conditions of work and duty. The system in which they worked has been characterised as one of

"hesitation, confusion and uncertainty. A measure is taken then partially retracted; a step is made forward, then backsliding begins".<sup>1</sup>

In opposition to this attitude and struggling to free the curriculum from restriction, to develop welfare services in schools and to improve work conditions, teachers began to drift naturally into alliance with people who were themselves out to convince the wider labour movement. These were the Socialists of the Social Democratic Federation, the Independent Labour Party and the Fabians. Though of differing political viewpoint, they were, in common with other smaller socialist societies, in a ferment of discussion, contradiction and argument. A craft union approach, more commonly characterised as a professional Trade Union, dominated the NUT but was, in turn, altering under the pressure of new ideas and changing work circumstances, not least the large numbers of relatively unqualified teachers. Key elements in the craft approach, such as defining and protecting skill, in opposition to employer controls, began to metamorphose under the pressure of socialist ideas in the new unions and the rise of the unskilled worker. In addition, the idea of service became a key element in constructing new alliances with the Labour movement.

However, as noted above, the teaching force was deeply divided and seemingly unable to alter the depressing conditions of employment which it suffered. Men teachers were paid on different scales from women teachers. The certificated were paid more than the uncertificated, and the supplementary teachers and the ex-pupil teachers were paid very little at all. Teachers were divided by religion, working for secular School Boards, Nonconformist or Church of England Schools, each of which had different conditions of employment from the others. The urban, and rural teachers were very different; the former working in large schools and in teachers' associations, the latter teaching all grades by themselves or with another, and geographically separated from other teachers. Teachers' associations had primarily recruited from their religious or School Board faction and The National Union of Teachers took only the certificated. From the 1870 Act to 1900, the small group of certificated teachers, who were mainly male, were swamped by an influx of various kinds of untrained or partly trained teachers, all of whom were paid less than the certificated teacher and who, in some areas, reduced all teachers' wages to low levels. Nothing strikes the observer so much as the divided state of teaching in 1900, and consequently teachers' weakness in altering or improving their salaries and conditions of work. Without a strong, united Union and powerful allies, teachers were pushed hither and thither, in accordance with the law of supply and demand, just as Robert Lowe expected them to be. The laws of a capitalist political economy and a Department of Education concerned mainly with reducing costs by altering the conditions of entry into teaching, created a senile, cheap, labour force for schools. Furthermore, each group of teachers tended to see the others as the cause of this state of affairs.

The male teachers blamed the influx of cheap, partly trained

women and the certificated teachers blamed the unqualified.

Their position with regard to their employers was generally that of the applicant, whether it was the local farmers or Church of England vicar, the Voluntary School Managers or the School Board members and officials. These were the people who controlled the social and economic lives of their workforce, and they were aided by the School Inspectors, at one time visiting annually to examine classes and ascertain grants. The exception to this servility of attitude by teachers was in the urban areas where well-developed local associations attempted to impinge on the management consciousness by means of deputations and letter-writing.

In the rural areas, teachers were often paid very poorly indeed and these areas were the base of the supplementary teacher, the untrained female teachers who often acted as school caretakers as well as teaching. They taught in one or two room schools, very often converted from other uses. These schools were often voluntary schools where teachers were responsible to the local vicar in the Parochial, Church of England or National Schools, and to local School Managers in the Wesleyan and British Schools. Pay was low in these schools, regardless of the teacher's qualifications. Writing in 1902, MacNamara showed how the qualifications, school expenditure and salaries were lower in the voluntary (i.e. mainly rural) schools as opposed to the urban Board school.<sup>2</sup> The working conditions in the voluntary schools were much worse than the Board schools - an NUT pamphlet described one school -

"Seated on ten broken desks are sixty children, working as best they may, it is some time before one can see them clearly, so gloomy is the place. There is but one room, that formerly served as a stable...in winter lamps are lit all day, so few and small are the windows. Maps, blackboards, books and stationery are antiquated, dilapidated or scarce. The playground is swimming in water, so is the approach to the latrines, which are never cleansed."<sup>3</sup>

This was, the NUT said, no worse than many others. The teachers working in the schools were at the financial mercy of the managers, usually

local farmers, and were often pressured to release children from the school for the various arable and cornharvests, grouse beating or stone picking. Even when the Agricultural Children's Act (1873) tried to impose restraints and penalties on the use of village children in this way, the teachers were often warned off aiding prosecutions.<sup>4</sup>

The most pressing problem for the rural teachers was insecurity of tenure. Added to this were the extraneous duties that were little more than compulsory. The Schoolmaster in the late Victorian and Edwardian period is full of complaints about these duties in rural areas, and a Union Survey in 1891 had shown that one in three teachers in the sample depended for their tenure on the performance of these duties.<sup>5</sup> These included organising the Church choir, playing the organ or acting as Sunday School superintendent.<sup>6</sup> One teacher, living in the clergyman's house, took her meals in the kitchen, sang in the choir, organised the Sunday School and taught the clergyman's child the piano as well as undertaking her school duties.<sup>7</sup> Insecurity of tenure meant that the Union was the only real help a teacher in this position could rely on. At Fingringhoe, near Colchester in Essex, a teacher was dismissed on December 24, 1895 because he had refused to sub-let a house from the Vicar at a high rent. With local and Union support, the teacher was reinstated. Another case was of a headteacher who was asked to resign by a new Vicar because "a new clergyman always gets on better with a schoolmaster of his own appointing."<sup>8</sup> These duties served to enslave the rural teacher, already geographically isolated from other teachers, and made teaching in the rural, voluntary school a tied occupation, similar to the conditions of the local farm labourers.

Although Board Schools were very different from rural schools, there was a shared sense of interference and control. In a well documented study of the London Board Schools,<sup>7</sup> it can be seen that

teachers bore the brunt of management moves for increased efficiency. Unlike the rural schools or even the smaller Board Schools, London School Board increased the efficiency of its schools by controlling the school policy and curriculum. Teachers were expected to be in their schools 10 minutes before the school day started, they signed into a book which was read by the School Managers. Quite often, the Managers had special rooms set aside in the school for their own purposes, sometimes with access from their own staircases. During the 1880's and 1890's, the teachers complained about the increase in attendance register marking (including duplicates), schedules and certificates that had to be filled plus quarterly attendance cards, Penny Bank supervision and the gradual increase in clerical work associated with pupil health and nutrition. At the same time, the Board felt that teachers were trying to influence its right to manage. It wanted to compel teachers to do things yet felt that their duty did not end with school hours. It created a number of Board Inspectors to examine its schools and resisted any idea that teachers had a place in curriculum matters —

"The decision of what is taught does not rest with the teachers employed. It would be nothing short of a revolution to maintain that the agent is to dictate to the employer what his employment is to be."<sup>9</sup>

The businessmen on the School Board constantly visited the schools and applied their own ideas and standards to their functioning. As the Metropolitan Board Teachers' Association grew in response to this interference became concerned with problems of promotion and salary, the Board itself talked more of the teachers' duty and interest in their work, replacing pecuniary interest alone. Between 1873 and 1900, the MBTA managed to enrol 90% of the Board teachers in its ranks and pursued interests in tenure, promotion, superannuation, curriculum and staffing ratios.

Although London was exceptional, it illustrates in microcosm the gradual rise of unionism among the certificated teachers. They were better organised in the towns than in rural areas. The Union had grown (after its foundation in 1870), from 6,880 teachers in 149 local associations (1873) to 43,615 teachers in 431 associations (1900) (approximately two thirds of the certificated teachers). Although it had grown rapidly, it was outnumbered by the large number of unqualified or partially certificated teachers which had entered the teaching force since 1870. This problem was to dominate its activities as a Union for many years, in opposing the uncertificated teachers who undermined its progress in salary and tenure problems, and in opposing the Board of Education that created new groups of teachers as and when the need arose.

The teachers in these schools were of various kinds. The supplementary teachers were practically all women, and their only qualifications was a personal approval by an Inspector, that they were vaccinated and over 18 years of age.<sup>10</sup> They tended to be local village girls or the wives of the local schoolmasters, and were sixteen thousand in number in 1899.<sup>11</sup> There were also the pupil teachers. These were selected from children of the manual working class, a method created earlier in the century to provide

"The cheapest means of supplying Elementary Schools with additional staff, and the main source from which to draw future masters and mistresses."<sup>12</sup>

They were often in charge of classes, though normally school apprentices, and could be awarded certificates without examination by an Inspector, between 1870 and 1873, to take charge of small, rural schools.<sup>13</sup>

Indeed, since the 1870 Act, the old teacher's certificate had been greatly devalued as the State intervened in the production of teachers to ensure there was a sufficient supply. Not only was there the large number of supplementary teachers but the pupil teachers had



doubled in number, between 1870 and 1875, to meet the new requirements (from fourteen to twenty-nine thousand).<sup>14</sup> Tropp described this period as one in which the certificated teachers were "immersed in a growing flood of untrained certificated teachers, assistant teachers, additional women teachers, pupil teachers and probationers."<sup>15</sup> The certificated teachers, by 1899, could include people without any proper training, or one year or two year trained in a college. Indeed, the Certificate could be gained without attendance at a College or a local pupil teachers' centre at all, just by correspondence. Uncertificated teachers were teachers who were still in the process of taking the certificate exams or had any other qualifications (including a university degree) but not the Teacher's Certificate.<sup>16</sup>

It was not only the proportion of the untrained or uncertificated which was increasing (approximately in the ratio of 1:3 in 1900), but also the composition of the force. Men teachers were becoming the minority. They had dropped from half to a quarter of the force by 1900, overwhelmed by the influx of the cheaper recruits to pupil teacher and uncertificated teacher status, one of the few job avenues open to women.<sup>17</sup>

The effect of this cheaper labour in teaching was that wage scales were depressed over all the country. Supplementary teachers were replacing pupil teachers in some schools, as they were cheaper and had no restriction of their duties. Uncertificated teachers were cheaper than the certificated, and women teachers were cheaper than men teachers at all levels. In each local area post 1900-economics meant that the cheaper teacher was often employed, after dismissing the expensive teacher. For instance, in York, the Education Committee had consistently reduced the quantity and quality of its teaching staff for economic reasons. It did this, not by dismissal, but by as steady process —

"it was decided that steps be taken gradually to remove such teachers as it seemed possible to dispense with, no one to be discharged, but reduction in staff to be made, if possible, when a teacher left or by making transfers of teachers from one school to another e.g. assistant master left and assistant mistress appointed. uncertificated mistress appointed in place of certificated mistress. ex-pupil teacher left."18

This policy, widespread in the period, was obviously resisted by the National Union of Teachers, but with a tendency towards a craft union approach, despising the female, unqualified diluted labour and trying strategies addressed to the employer to eliminate them. Not until the next decade (1910-1920) did the Union seriously consider altering its approach to these teachers and in turn, reassessing the role of the State in the past creation of these teachers. In 1900, though, teachers were divided against each other as a result of the post 1870 expansion of the workforce and the ways in which the State and local employers divided them in pursuit of a cheap labour policy.

In the period between 1902 and 1914, the education system was characterised by its mixture of adhoc remedies proposed by the Board of Education and the local resistance, tardiness or enthusiasm within the Education Authorities (created in the 1902 Act in replacement of the School Boards). The signs of release from the straitjacket of payment by results and a powerful Inspectorate, in the encouragement of curriculum change and the development of a caring professionalism, aligned to the growth of school welfare facilities were constantly confounded by the penny-pinching resistance of the rural and town education authorities. The Board of Education was not and did not wish to be in control of a centralised system of education. It operated through a series of ambiguous clauses attached to Exchequer grants-in-aid. The key word 'efficiency' could be applied to release changes in the working or provision of local authority education services but this was rarely used.

Indeed in future decades (disputes in West Ham, Herefordshire and Abertillery), teachers expecting pressure to be applied to their local authorities who had run-down or patched their education services found this power of the Board to be used entirely at whim — related to wider tactical purposes in which the Board needed to goad an Authority or restrain teachers. This power was, then, a useful way to influence and direct the system without overtly controlling it. At all times except in a crisis it could be expected to work well — in the Board's terms.

The post 1900 growth of new school-based facilities and teacher involvement with them is a sign of a changing policy towards schools. The post-Boer war unease in Government circles at the poor quality of the army recruits and the increasing attempts by local and national ILP and Social Democratic Federation councillors and union leaders (like Will Thorne and Margaret MacMillan) to expand welfare facilities for children led to legislation on school meals and school medical services. Again local authorities varied in their adoption of school nursing posts and the creation of school canteens or local baths. There is evidence that teachers become involved on a personal level or in an organised policy with pupil cleanliness and nutrition; the provision of cocoa or soup in the classrooms, helping the school nurse or doctor or in the creation of toothbrush clubs.<sup>19</sup> Teachers involved themselves with political organisations that fought for these welfare facilities — at this time, this had to mean the ILP or SDF or Trades Council groups opposed to the ratepayer domination of local councils.

The building of new schools, the supply of staff and from this period the extension of welfare facilities, along with provision of roads, lighting and other municipal services, caused financial strain in many local authorities. These tended to be in urban areas where population increases due to the establishment of new industry or the emigration from

the countryside had occurred in a short space of time. The government grants-in-aid did not grow in proportion to the demands on services in these areas, which led to an entrenched reaction to further developments on the part of ratepayer groups, represented in the Conservative or Liberal Parties. Expenditure rose but the proportion met by Exchequer grants fell between 1905 and 1912.<sup>20</sup> The ratepayers were having to pay more for services they did not tend to use - the elementary schools. This was a constant source of friction between teachers and local councils.

'Interest in curriculum change had been gaining among the teachers, especially when the link between curriculum subjects, school grant, and examination results had passed with the end of payment by results. The 'rigidity and calculation',<sup>21</sup> of the 'Reading, Writing and Arithmetic' curriculum, with its rote learning, lack of individuality of approach and fact-grading was going. They had not gone, by any means, as many teachers would have worked throughout their teaching experience within such a system. The new Code of Regulations, issued in 1904, emphasised the needs of the individual child and a widened list of curriculum subjects that could be taught (though this list also eliminated other subjects nearer to secondary subjects, like science, which was popular in London). The Code was written like an handbook of suggestions not a compulsory instruction manual. It appeared at the same time as the growth of a New Education approach which was affecting the old certainties of the masters of method. Herbartian psychologists, Montessori kindergarteners, Deweyans, moral trainers and heuristic scientists, all debated and argued about the child and the curriculum.<sup>22</sup> The very idea of an elementary education, and, of course, the teacher, was changing and expanding.

On financial and educational grounds, teachers sought allies, who in turn, were sought by those people in the labour movement who wished to see a new kind of elementary school develop. An example of this tentative relationship came with the production of the Board of Education Circular 709. This circular asked local authorities to lower class sizes, in particular, to make 60 pupils the maximum.<sup>23</sup> Immediately, several authorities tried to get the Circular withdrawn and the NUT produced a leaflet (Smaller Classes and Better Teaching Staff, 1909) addressed to the 'workers of the country' appealing for support against these Local Authorities. It argued that the Circular would only cost more where the Local Education Authority had already insufficient or unqualified staff. The need to win allies lead the NUT inexorably to the working class although it coyly addressed their 'various organisations' without name. The appeal was direct - it asked them "to show their determination to secure for their little ones greater advantages at school than they themselves enjoyed."<sup>24</sup>

This appeal was made by people who were themselves from working class backgrounds, a point which had not escaped the Board of Education. The cheap and relatively efficient elementary education system, with its narrow, heavily supervised curriculum and a teaching staff derived mainly from the manual working class had become insufficient. One of the grounds for this insufficiency was the class background of these teachers.<sup>25</sup> The need for a 'well-equipped body of teachers' meant that the "disposition to maintain the educational barriers between class and class no longer existed,"<sup>26</sup> and that the old pupil teacher recruitment led to a 'narrowness of intellectual and professional outlook'. The use of the term 'professional' here has further resonances in this study and suggests that working class teachers teaching working class children were creating a possible threat to the new needs of the State and its education

system. To deal with this recruitment from the new secondary schools where intending pupil-teachers would not be segregated on class lines but be able to mix freely with other pupils 'destined for different professions' was recommended. The whole Circular was addressed to an issue it saw clearly as social class-based education system which was creating a narrow, class-based teaching corps, separated from members of the professional classes (it later referred to this class as civil servants, typists, shop assistants and post office workers). It was a plea against a working class alliance about elementary education which it saw as determined within a 'narrow professionalism' - one that saw a natural link between teachers, workers and workers' children. The flaw in the plan was that the new second school graduates would still be proletarianised by an economic system operating within a laissez-faire capitalist system and determined to create cheap sources of labour. What it hoped to alter was the ideological outlook of the teacher.

Social observers, in the Edwardian era, began to remark upon the social position of the elementary teacher and the fact that large numbers of them existed. Both these facts created a feeling of unease in the observers. W.H.D. Rouse talked of the 'deep discontent' among the teachers, discriminated against financially and by their employers.<sup>27</sup> He didn't, but he could so easily have, quoted from John Morley, when making his criticisms of clergymen, describing teachers as their 'creatures' or in the position of 'master and servant'.<sup>28</sup> C.F.G. Masterman, a Liberal M.P. writing in 1911, began to see a political importance attached to teachers —

They appear as the mainstay of the political machine in suburban districts, serving upon the municipal bodies, in work clear-headed and efficient, the leaders in the churches and chapels. They are taking up the position in the urban districts which for many generations was occupied by county clergy in their rural districts."<sup>29</sup>

A more disapproving version of teachers' growing political presence was written in the Morning Post, an extreme right-wing daily paper.

"Not only is the NUT probably the best organised Trade Union in the country, but the teacher is a very keen politician and a powerful canvasser. Strong majorities in the County Councils have ere now melted away at their battle cry. Hence it is unwise to ignore what they are thinking and saying...."<sup>30</sup>

W.R. Lawson, writing in a book for 'Parents, Ratepayers and Men of Business',<sup>31</sup> was concerned by the proliferation of teachers outnumbering Church of England clergymen, barristers and doctors, and growing rapidly. But it was not their numbers but their ideology that worried him. Among them, there were 'secularists and socialists' produced by the new municipal colleges and reflecting the 'prejudices and limitations' of their class, the working class. In effect, they were doing the bidding of the 'Socialist leaders' and in a 'discreet way play(ing) the Socialist missionary'. As evidence of this he cites the rise of trade unionism concurrent with the growth of a State education system. His advice to the 'ratepayers and businessmen' echoes Circular 573 on Pupil Teachers, teachers had to be recruited from a higher social class, free from narrow biases. Lawson was a propagandist for just those people who were opposing the teachers and their allies in the local education authority districts. Although, like the Morning Post, he had a tendency to overestimate the teacher's power, and reflected a fevered conspiracy theory, he commentated upon two important features about the elementary teachers identified by the middle class observers — their growing interest in socialism (following a secular tradition already observed in Board School areas)<sup>32</sup> and their working class interests. He concluded:

"In these days, when class jealousies are being so unscrupulously fostered and exploited for political purposes the real state of the account as between the working class and those above it should be clearly understood. As regards education it shows a large balance in favour of the working class. Not only is much more done for their schools than for those of any other class but they have a practical monopoly of the teaching in them."<sup>33</sup>

This was just what some councillors wanted to hear; providing them with an excuse to contrive restrictive policies on schools and a clear link between their political opponents and schoolteachers:- a link that teachers appear gradually to make themselves.

"At this time, complaints began to arrive at the Board of Education about teachers being involved in political activities. These were usually made by either Conservatives or Liberals (depending which party the teacher belonged to) and concerned election periods when teachers acted as election agents or allegedly gave special holidays or taught party songs to the children. The Board felt obliged, in this new climate of concern for teachers' growing social and political power, to distinguish between political rights and political involvement and they defined a policy which was to continue for several decades. There was to be no general prohibition of political activity even when the teachers were socialists except if it could be proved that the curriculum was affected by teacher bias or that the law was being broken. One reason why they could not prohibit teachers directly was because this would make clear the relations between the teachers and the State. It would be used by them as "an argument in favour of according to them the status of civil servants."<sup>34</sup>

However there were inhibitory factors in the creation of a working class alliance in elementary education. One of the most important was corporal punishment. It is clear that a system of



education that was seen by many parents and children as coercive would have difficulty in creating any educational alliance on class lines. Corporal punishment was a vital part of a system which included attendance officers, and which depended on strong controls over very large classes. Although it was often meant to be administered only by headteachers, assistant teachers protested if there was any restriction of their use of the cane. Yet it was the cane that caused open conflict between teachers and parents and children. In many areas, schooling involved a running battle between teachers trying to impose order in the classroom and parents or children defending pupils from the cane.<sup>35</sup> This conflict could place teachers on opposite sides to their erstwhile allies in the ILP or SDF<sup>36</sup> who were opposed to corporal punishment just as much as they were for a better, freer education system. School strikes against the cane, which were not uncommon, could often be led by the sons or daughters or local socialists or be influenced by the actions of local trade unions.<sup>37</sup>

Corporal punishment was one wedge between teachers and the working class, another was the apolitical ideology adopted by the NUT. From its early days, the Union needed to strengthen its unity in the face of strong religious divisions between its members and the way in which religion was bound up with the employer in rural and town schools. As part of this need for unity and not wishing to antagonise its membership who were in political parties, the Union lobbied Parliament and exerted influence on the Department (later Board) of Education by means of sponsored M.P.'s - in 1895, it had two, Grey (a conservative) and Yoxall (a liberal). A part of its apolitical ideology was its interest in professionalism. The key to understanding its use of the term 'professional' is its context. The NUT was a craft union, small in number in 1870, faced with an influx of diluted labour into teaching and

needing to reassert its expertise and case for adequate remuneration as trained, certificated teachers. Its chief aims, from the beginning are a reflection of this craft union approach: it wanted to control entry into teaching by means of a register; to reduce the amount of employer interference; to gain job security, adequate salaries; and pensions; to be eligible for recruitment into management (The Inspectorate).

The essential feature of craft unionism is its attempt to secure a monopoly over a craft by means of uniting people with similar interests: in this case the preservation of remuneration and promotion related to certification. As the number of uncertificated, supplementary and pupil teachers increased, the certificated teachers in the Union (and not all were<sup>38</sup>) found that their attempts to restrict entry into teaching were unavailing. A professional register of teachers and control over entry examinations were the very things that could not be given to the teachers. Attempts to place the craft union approach within a professional frame were partially unsuccessful, as professionalism was seen as 'duty'<sup>39</sup> involving deference, and removed from control. The admission of the Union to consultation was only accepted by the Department of Education in the 1890's and this policy was practically reversed by Morant in the next decade. In common with other craft unions, such as the Amalgamated Society of Engineers (founded only twenty years before the NUT), the Union found that the greatest threat came from the semi-skilled, though it was similarly distressed by compulsory overtime (extraneous duties), a flood of apprentices (uncertificated and pupil teachers), 'illegal' men (the Supplementaries) and piece work rates (a version of 'payment by results').<sup>40</sup> The semi-skilled teachers were able to do the same work as the certificated teacher for less money, and if they were women, for even less. The social exclusion practiced

by the craft union came to be fundamentally threatened and then revised during the period from 1900 to 1920.<sup>41</sup>

The craft unions organised to maintain or raise their standard of living, and the only way they could effectively do this was by controlling the supply of workers. If the supply was controlled by them, and not by the employers, then they could increase the value returned to them from the sale of their labour power. The greater the oversupply, the more depressed the salary level. As the Union grew and organised it constantly tried to restrict teacher supply - by means of a professional register, the elimination of the supplementaries, a pension fund and tenure rights. At the same time, the Department of Education strove to create new sources of qualified teachers to reduce costs and supply demand. What helped the Union was its ability to mobilise its resources (legal department, finance and propaganda) against the relatively weak local authority employers, though it always depended upon the strength of the local teachers' organisation. Yet for the first thirty years of the Union's existence it mainly occupied itself with securing Parliamentary representation, Education Department deputations and electoral pressure. The early concern for a professional register was confounded by a Bill that actually excluded elementary teachers from membership. The Bill declared that:

"The relation in which such teachers stand to the Education Department forbids the interference of any other authority. Those who act as elementary teachers are trained so to act and are paid for their services by the State. It is not unreasonable to expect that the paymaster, acting on behalf of the public, should insist on imposing his own conditions, and seeking precisely the qualifications which he may deem adequate for the fulfilment of these conditions.<sup>42</sup>

This was the first of a series of humiliations for the Union that the demand for a register of skilled teachers gave rise to.<sup>43</sup> A later register separated the elementary teachers from the secondary school teachers

which allowed the Secretary of the Union, Yoxall, to express his further claim, consistent with craft union notions of skill, that the new Register was a symbol of the struggle taking place

"between the existence of teachers and teaching as a profession ..... and the demand of administrators in this country to reduce teaching to a state function and teachers to state functionaries."<sup>44</sup>

The rethinking that took place on this validation of the policy of certificate exclusiveness was profound and became part of the change in approach to unionism and the uncertificated discussed in this period (1900-1920).<sup>45</sup>

It is possible to argue that the NUT was always a Trade Union yet observers saw either ambiguity about its actions or saw no conflict at all. In other words, it was agreed to be Trade Union-like but what confused the contemporary observer was its connection to the idea of professionalism. As we have noted, Beatrice Webb described the NUT as 'like a Trade Union' and in its objects and methods 'a marked approximation to the Trade Union type', yet she felt that its success was mainly due to its Legal Department. Although she added that it had a Professional code of conduct (an afterthought in 1911), she pointed out the very crux of the Union's problem. It had failed to control the supply of teachers and their qualification and so was unable to raise the market value of its labour. Webb explained that this was because of control over entry by the State, and so, logically, the notion of a Professional Register must be a failure (even though it allowed some elementary teachers to meet Eton Masters and University Dons!).<sup>46</sup>

What was described as professionalism was in fact a strategy common to all craft unions but with key words derived from the historical past of educated, service groups. Professionalism was used as a term describing a service to the community and freedom from State Control.

What it meant was a determination to define and control the skill of teaching in ways that were often oppositional to the definition or control over teaching imposed by employers. When teachers talked of autonomy or a 'free hand',<sup>47</sup> or of 'professional dignity',<sup>48</sup> it has to be seen in a context of imposed and arbitrary control, of a direct and humiliating nature, exercised by managers, clergymen or School Board businessmen and an indifferent Department or Board of Education. It was an attempt to unite the certificated teachers within a definition of skill that they had socially constructed for themselves; not one seen as part of a devalued cheap teaching service nor just a technical class control nor a dutiful, loyal workforce. That may be how others saw them but they saw themselves as a craft union with a skill which was not just a question of knowledge (certification) but attitude. The education service was failing because it did not allow them the relative freedom to give of their 'best' nor did it include the creative aspects of 'skill' nor did it serve the community (the workers' children) adequately.

'Professionalism' was a particular term used by teachers to symbolise their attempts to define and control their work and was part and parcel of their opposition to employer control - over pay, tenure, cheap unskilled teachers and compulsory overtime. It was not a word in wider currency among the manual working classes but it generated in the teachers the will to take on extra welfare duties, join labour societies or groups or resist child labour, and yet at the same time, resist an imposed notion of duty, social controls by Squirearchy or commercial classes and inferred roles as narrow and ill-educated. Of course, professionalism is contradictory. It has ideological overtones, in the period, of a political nature. The Register is seen as an almost magical solution to all teachers' problems. The teachers in 1900 were at the point of examining their past strategies and evaluating their

progress, and this continued apace after the 1907 West Ham strike and the start of the 1913 Salary Campaign.

The question of 'service' is one key element in understanding the term 'professionalism' (not status or class). Each improvement in the teacher's conditions and pay helped the child, each improvement in resources or buildings helped the teacher. Webb pointed this out in 1915. With far more opportunity than was open to the manual worker, when the teacher fought for better salaries or tenure they were rendering an improvement in the quality of the service offered. She illustrates this by estimating the increased teaching load on teachers since they freed themselves from 'payment by results' (and which often reduced teachers' earnings after losing a share in the grant earned), by the campaign for smaller classes, against child labour and penurious Local Authorities and all attempts to limit the duration, quality or content of the elementary education.<sup>49</sup> It is the element of service which was to become the key to a change in the direction of the teachers. It helped to create the alliance with labour, especially the socialist element within it (in the broadest sense), using a common political discourse, and developing a class consciousness. It is this alliance with labour which has been described as composed of, for professionals,

"an ethic of service, intelligence and expertise in pursuit of humanitarian ends and a civilising mission...".<sup>50</sup>

Other elements of professionalism that changed and altered in different periods and in 1900 were at the point of shifting were based upon social status. As the certificate was undermined and strategies to save the related standard of living were unsuccessful, status as a reflection of differentiation from the teacher's own class background, lost ground to a reaffirmation of teaching within a wider alliance, constructed on a different union model.<sup>51</sup>

By the time of the West Ham strike in 1907 (a significant victory for the teachers) elements of new approaches to Union organisation and a wide alliance on educational progress and against retrenchment and local reaction, came to the fore. The contradictions in the teachers and the labour movement were also exposed. It is to this strike and the contradictions and advances that it illustrated that the next chapter is devoted. It illustrates, in detail, some of the issues raised here.

## FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER 1

1. Selleck, R.J.W. (1968), 'The New Education 1870-1914'  
Isaac Pitman & Sons, p. 44.
2. MacNamara, T.J. (1902) 'Burning Questions - The Education Bill'  
Swan Sonnenschein.  

Expenditure per scholar	Vol. Sch. £1.15s.2d.
	Board Sch. £2. 5s.2d.
Number of children per certificated teacher	Vol. Sch. 103 [3,043,000 children]
	Board Sch. 76 [2,662,669 children]
Average salaries for male Headteacher	Church Sch. £127.12.8d. - (often included tied cottage)
	Wesleyan Sch. £182.11s.4.
	Board Sch. £170.10s.9d.
3. Hurt, J.S. (1979), 'Elementary School and the Working Classes 1860-1918' R.K.P. p. 108.
4. Hurt, J.S. (1979), p. 200, *ibid.*
5. Horn, Pamela (1978) 'Education in Rural England 1800-1914'  
Gill & MacMillan, p. 192.
6. Thompson, Donna (1927) 'Professional Solidarity among the Teachers of England' Columbia Univ. Press, p. 62.
7. Thompson, D. *ibid.* p. 63. [also Horn, p. 193].
8. Williams, R.A. (1953) 'The Development of Professional Status among the Elementary School Teachers under the London School Board 1870-1904' London, unpub. Ph.D.
9. Williams, *ibid.* p. 122.
10. MacNamara *op.cit.* They were created in the 1875 Code.
11. Tropp *op.cit.* p. 118.
12. Board of Education Circular 573 (1907) 'Memorandum on the History and Prospects of the Pupil Teacher System.'



13. Tropp op.cit. p. 114.
14. Tropp op.cit. p. 114.
15. Tropp op.cit. p. 117.
16. In 1899. Certificated teachers: 62,085  
Uncertificated/ex-pupil  
teachers: 30,233 [Tropp p.118]  
Supplementaries: 16,171  
Pupil Teachers: 30,783  
Probationers: 2,500  
  
Distribution: Cert. Uncert. Supps. Pupil T  
Vol. schools 38 23 18 21  
Board schools 51 21 5 23 [MacNamara]  
London Board 81 4 0 15
17. Horn, p. 112. Uncertificated etc. 1875 13% -  
1914 41% teaching force
18. City of York E.C. 1st Triennial Report 1903-1906  
Annual Reports 1907-1913  
  
This policy was reversed after 1907; certificated teachers were appointed to the new, larger classes. It was reversed again in 1915, as it was felt there had not been a sufficient gain in efficiency. [Yorkshire Herald 21 July, 1915].
19. Hurt, J. op.cit.
20. Gosden, P.H.J.H. (1972) 'The Evolution of a Profession',  
Blackwell. 1905/6 53.9% of total cost (p.35)  
1911/12 48.2% of total cost
21. Selleck, op.cit. p. 44.
22. Selleck, op.cit.
23. It also recommended the withdrawal of all male supplementaries, restrictions on the use of this class of teacher and their regular inspection.

24. NUT Pamphlet (1909) Smaller Classes and Better Teaching Staff.
25. A circular addressed to this problem was 573 Board of Education 'Memorandum on the History and Prospects of the Pupil Teacher System' 1907.
26. as (25) above.
27. Contemporary Review, August 1900, quoted in Gosden.
28. John Morley (1873) 'The Struggle for a National Education' Chapman Hall.
29. Masterman, C.F.G. (1911) 'The Condition of England' . Methuen  
, quoted in Partington, G. (1976) 'Women Teachers in the 20th Century', NFER.
30. Morning Post, 24 November, 1911 in Tropp.  
A point echoed in Beatrice Webb New Statesman Supplement, Sept. 25, 1915.
31. Lawson, W.R. (1908), 'John Bull and his Schools', Blackwood.
32. Williams, R.A. op.cit. One third of Metropolitan teachers had refused to teach Scripture in school (1893) and their association fought off attempts to bar these teachers from promotion (p. 167).
33. Lawson, op.cit. p. 220.
34. PRO Ed 24/412 Miscellaneous Complaints regarding teachers' political activities 1909-1910.
35. For a litany of examples of this conflict over the case and pupil/parent resistance to it (and to the restricted curriculum) see Humphreys, D. (1981) 'Hooligans or Rebels? An oral History of Working Class Childhood and Youth 1889-1939', Blackwell.



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# **MISSING PRINT**

36. McCann, W.P. 'Trade Union', Cooperative and Socialist Organisations in relation to Popular Education 1870-1902'  
Unpub. Ph.D. Manchester 1960.  
Not until much later did corporal punishment decline - at the time of the breakthrough in child-centred education and the socialist alliance in the '20's. Musgrave, P.W. 'Corporal Punishment in Some English Elementary School 1900-1939' in Research in Education No. 17, May 1971.
37. Humphreys, op.cit. p.62-9. Also Lee, Jenny p. 62/3.
38. Tropp, op.cit. p. 157. 1895 83% of male certificated in the Union and only 35% of female certificated teachers.
39. Williams, R.A. op.cit. p. 82.
40. The parallel can be explored in Penn, R. 'Skilled Manual Workers in the Labour Process 1836-1964' in Wood, S. (Ed.) (1982) 'The Degradation of Work', Hutchinson.  
Webb described payment by results as 'a demoralising type of piecework with a perpetual downward thrust in favour of a purely mechanical product manufactured in the cheapest possible way', New Statesman Suppl. Sept. 25, 1915.  
Other aspects to craft unionism was suspicion of state intervention and lack of interest in Labour representation - Schofield, I. 'The Labour Movement and Educational Policy 1900-1931' unpub. M.Ed. Thesis (Manchester) 1964.
41. Even before Union policy changed, to include uncertificated teachers in membership, (1919), local associations of teachers (in Bradford, Rhondda etc.) often included them.
42. The Educational Times January, 1891 quoted in Parry, N. and Parry, J. (1974) 'Teachers and Professionalism: The failure of an occupational strategy' in Flude, M. and

- Ahier, J. (1974) 'Educability, Schools and Ideology',  
Croom Helm.
43. It is also of interest in the clear way teachers are seen as  
state (or civil) servants, something which is later to be  
denied and abhorred in numerous Board of Education memoranda,  
H.A.L. Fisher and Lord Eustace Percy (both Presidents of the  
Board of Education).
44. Reported in 'Review of Incorporated Association of  
Headteachers', March 1909 and quoted in Baron, G. (1953)  
'The teacher's registration movement' Brit. Journal of Educ.  
Studies, Vol. 2.
45. This movement was heightened by the lowering of the connection  
between certification and headships. In 1855, most  
certificated teachers could become Heads, by 1895 only 60%  
could be and by 1918, only 30%. Ozga, J.T. and Lawn, M.A.  
'Teachers, Professionalism and Class', Falmer Press, p.72.
46. New Statesman Sept. 25, 1919. Supplement: English Teachers  
and Their Professional Organisation.
47. Webb quotes a NUT Conference Resolution 1903 - "right to a  
free hand to conduct their schools according to their own  
judgement".
48. Webb, 1880 Presidential Address and in pamphlet (1913)  
'The NUT: Its Activities, Achievements and Aspirations'.
49. For a discussion of the social construction of skill.  
More, C. (1981) 'Skill and the English Working Class 1870-1914',  
Croom Helm.
50. Gareth Stedman Jones 'Marching into History'?  
New Statesman Jan./Feb. '82.

51. Service is a concept shared with other municipal employees although they were organised later than teachers. As municipal services grew, so an associated white collar workforce had as its standard 'service to community'. The National Association of Local Government Employees was one such association. It shared with teachers the idea of a natural 'justice' that was gainsaid to them. In other respects, NALGO showed the same difficulties in organising as did the NUT, reflecting the craft to industrial union shift.
- Spoor, A. (1967) 'White Collar Union: Fifty Years of NALGO', Heinemann.
- Klingender, F.D. (1935) 'The Condition of Clerical Labour in Britain', Lawrence and Wishart and Ozga and Lawn (1981) op.cit.

2. TEACHERS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYERS: PORTSMOUTH DISPUTE (1896)  
AND THE WEST HAM STRIKE (1907)

In the late Victorian and Edwardian period, town councils mainly consisted of ratepayer representatives, whether Liberal or Conservative, who tended to see their function as the efficient management of local authority services. Efficient management meant, in essence, that rates should be kept as low as possible and while grants-in-aid from the Central Exchequer may be accepted, outside political control related to the grants should be kept to the minimum. Conservative and Liberal councillors tended to resist any extension of local authority services, even with grants-in-aid, if they meant a consequent rise in local rates. Not until the late 1920's was any kind of weighting given by central to local government, on the basis of the rateable value present in the area or the special factors with which they might need assistance, such as a rise in the local population of small children or large scale unemployment. Before then local authorities varied considerably in their capacity to raise local rates and meet the urgent needs in their areas.

Pressures on the local education system occurred where an area of medium rateable value had a prolonged increase in population due to establishment of new industries or trade. This was the case in two disputes which altered the debates in the NUT about its work as a teachers' organisation and its natural allies in that work.

The condition of Portsmouth's schools between 1883 and 1894 was one of gradual deterioration. There was a complete lack of any new building yet the population of the town had grown continually. Even the Education Department had cause to remind the local School Board of its obligations, after 1888, and this suggests conditions were indeed poor as it was uncommon for the Education Department to intervene

although it had the power to do so if the local authority was inefficient or extravagant.<sup>1</sup> At the time of these reminders, in 1890/91, the average number of pupils per teacher was 100, if headteachers and pupil teachers were excluded.

The election of a new School Board in 1892 enabled the local NUT secretary to visit the School Board President to discuss the perturbing conditions of the schools and the teachers' low salaries. Bramsdon, the President, later recalled the visit and the agreement reached between them

"That the teachers, in view of the existing difficulties, could not persist in their demands, but would wait a reasonable time if a promise were made to give their salaries proper attention. The promise was made and the strike did not take place".<sup>2</sup>

At the annual meeting of the Portsmouth and District Teachers' Association in January 1892 the question of the local salaries was emphasised by the President and ex-President. The ex-President's speech is of great interest here —

"..He did not know of an Association in England where the percentage of members was so great as in Portsmouth. He touched on the question of salaries ... the only way to attract notice was to agitate public opinion by a general strike (hear, hear). They were not prepared for such an event just at present, but there was no doubt that before long there would be a strike against the miserable salaries now received (Applause)...."<sup>3</sup>

The dispute between the teachers and the School Board, although in abeyance for four years, overrode the fact the new School Board was an improvement on the last one. A local headmaster described the Board as 'generous' and 'just' in meeting the teachers' claims, the officials as courteous, and felt they were at the mercy of the financial position they inherited.<sup>4</sup> Certainly members of the School Board were politically progressive, two of the members had recently addressed a local Trades Council demonstration alongside Tom Mann, the I.L.P. leader. The teachers' concern and anger was concentrated on the conditions of work and their



improvement. For a period of several years, the teachers waited for an improvement in the local salaries.

There was also the question of compulsory overtime. Teachers at Portsmouth were expected to attend school at 7.55 a.m. for clerical work and to instruct pupil-teachers. As the clerical work took only a few minutes and the greatly-reduced number of pupil teachers were instructed by the Headteachers, another reason for the Board's steadfastness on the 7.55 rule was necessary. This is suggested by the School Board who mention in their discussions, the necessary discipline of their workforce, the fact that they were large employers in Portsmouth, and that adherence to School Board regulations was essential to discipline.<sup>5</sup> In a curiously contemporary aside, Bramsdon was to blame the teacher unrest on those teachers not brought up in the local schools and the town but on 'imported teachers'.<sup>6</sup>

According to the teachers, though not some headteachers, the 7.55 rule was not only superfluous but had been operated in a casual manner until the School Board had suddenly tightened up its observation. A memorial sent by certificated assistants to the Portsmouth School Board included the suggestions:

"that the aforesaid regulations be so amended as to prevent the necessity for the attendance of all teachers at their respective schools at 7.55 a.m.... That your scale of salaries for certificated assistant teachers be so amended as to provide that the salaries of the assistants in your service shall be equal to those paid by similar Boards in other parts of England".<sup>7</sup>

Within a week of this memorial, four teachers were dismissed from one school for 'disobeying' the rule over a period of a year. Although this step was obviously taken to intimidate the local NUT, the Board did not feel they were likely to cause more trouble. Bramsdon was certain that "There is nothing like organised opposition amongst our teachers to the rule of the Board."<sup>8</sup>

The Hampshire Telegraph was not so certain.

".... it seems hard that they (the teachers) should be punished vindictively.. Moreover it would be a serious thing for the Board to have to fight so strong and well-organised a body as the National Union of Teachers. The result of such a contest would hardly be in the Board's favour".<sup>9</sup>

Three teachers were transferred to the dismissed teachers' school, but within a few days they returned to their previous schools where they were refused the right to teach, becoming locked-out. The following day, February 25th, the remaining two teachers at the school, Highland Road School, handed in their month's notice. On Wednesday, the Board received the notices of seven teachers at Penhale Road schools, who particularly referred to the new strict enforcement of the 7.55 rule. The impression given in the Telegraph and the Schoolmaster is that many more teachers would hand in their notice over the issues raised. Speakers at a meeting of the District Teachers' Association on March 21st described the overtime rule as 'a great evil in Portsmouth for a long time past'... Reprimands had been given by School Board members to staff for arriving a few minutes late in the morning, yet the teachers were often working late in the evenings.

A speaker at the meeting mentioned that

"when a vacancy occurred in a local school, the teacher was told he must work until 5 p.m. .. (and) ... two schools worked overtime regularly all the year round"<sup>10</sup>

That the Portsmouth conflict was of interest to other teachers in England can be ascertained from the twenty-one telegrams approving the teachers' action from other local Associations, with many personal letters of support in addition as reported in the Schoolmaster. The National Federation of Assistant Teachers published letters of support in the Schoolmaster in which they clearly saw the Portsmouth fight, not as a local one but on the principle of unionism and its national defence viz:

"it is no exaggeration to say that the future comfort and freedom of thousands of teachers will be very largely affected by the outcome of the fight now going on".<sup>11</sup>

The School Board accepted a local deputation of teachers, accompanied by the NUT solicitor, Mr. T. A. Organ. Gradually under pressure they promoted some teachers at a higher level of salary - in fact, to new pay scales created in November 1895 but hitherto never put into operation. Although a gradual process, this meant the teachers had forced the Board to adopt the scale they had previously shelved. The Board initially refused to take back the dismissed or resigning teachers. It took another three months of agitation before the Highland Road teachers were reinstated, and the further point, the 7.55 rule, was changed to 8.30 a.m.

The Portsmouth dispute illustrates a number of factors in the employment and organisation of teachers in this period in the towns.<sup>12</sup> Firstly, teachers were employees, their wages and conditions of work were created solely by the local School Board. The Board could alter or ignore any salary agreement it had made and the teachers were often in no position to influence the Board. The Board quite often ignored the existence of the teachers' union, seeing it as in conflict with their right to manage and as alien to the local community, imported from elsewhere; this view generated statements about 'our' teachers as opposed to the union teachers. Secondly, although the Board might have no qualms about seeing the Union as potential troublemakers, the teachers were often very moderate in their attitudes and demands. At Portsmouth, they were in some sympathy, initially, with the financial difficulties of the Board and its attempts to alter its position. The local associations had some difficulty in fighting a School Board or the later local education authority effectively. A hard and dangerous battle for the teachers might only end in a partial success and it was quite likely that the composition of the Board, their

employers, would remain unchanged. A local dispute was well publicized in the Schoolmaster and though the lessons of a dispute, such as ways to organise or use of tactical resignations, may not be brought out, the detail of the dispute allowed other associations to draw their own conclusions, apart from sending solidarity greetings. Portsmouth had an encouraging effect on teachers intimidated by voluntary or Board School managers elsewhere and on those who wanted the NUT to organise itself as a union with a sustentation fund and divisional organisers.

The dispute at West Ham in 1907 occurred in an urban area which politically and socially differed significantly from Portsmouth. West Ham was the base of the new Gas Workers' Union, led by Will Thorne, and the large working class population, working in the gasworks, shipbuilding and engineering works had been politically revolutionised by the effects of the new unionism. Thorne was a member of the Social Democratic Federation, a Marxist organisation led by H.M. Hyndman, but he laid greater stress on municipal elections than on political agitation in the Unions than did the SDF.

Thorne was elected to the West Ham Council in 1891 on a programme which included the eight-hour day, provision of municipal baths and washbasins and municipalisation of the tram service. He had always been a great supporter of working class education and rectifying the almost total lack of schools in West Ham was one of his priorities as a Labour councillor. Thorne put together a disciplined coalition of Trade Unionists, Radicals, Irish Nationalists and Labour groups, and in 1898 they became the first Labour group to win a Town Council, although only by a narrow margin. Thorne said then that the Labour Party as a whole would be judged by the progress it made in West Ham.

Although the political and social unity present in West Ham was unlike that present in Portsmouth, the two areas shared the same economic tension in council affairs. Again, a small middle class ratepaying section of the population had to pay for the social and municipal services of a large working class. Every demand for better municipal services, including education, was resisted by the ratepayers. The West Ham council was mainly composed of people determined to resist extension of services and to reduce the cost of operating those they had. In two specific ways Labour group policies affected the education system. Within a short time, they were building new schools and paying 'trade union' rates to their teachers. At the same time they were extending municipal services to include housing, libraries and tramways, and making union membership compulsory for council workers.

By 1900, they were defeated on the charge of 'high rates and extravagant spending'<sup>13</sup> as they had succeeded in uniting every ratepayer interest group against them. It was the ratepayer alliance that in 1907 altered the teachers' pay scales. The previous scales had attracted teachers into West Ham, when male teachers, for instance, were scarce in London. The teachers had been guaranteed by the Council

"That any modification of the scale of salaries shall not act to the detriment of a teacher already in the service of the Council".<sup>14</sup>

In 1905/6, West Ham had very high unemployment rates, unprecedented in the borough, and this must have decided the ratepayer group on a course of new economies, hence the new teachers' scales. In March, 1907, the Council created four new grades of certificated teachers, with newly diminished increments and lower scale points. The elaborate scheme affected over 300 teachers who lost relatively large sums of money and would have to wait longer periods for the next incremental stage.

The teachers had been affected by the gains made in the Labour municipalisation programme, such as in pay and services, and the economies were seen as the beginning of a dismantling process. The solid NUT membership organised public meetings and deputations, supported by local Labour councillors, the Trades Council and Will Thorne (the newly elected Labour M.P. for West Ham South). The teachers' fight became one platform on which to resist the de-municipalisation process, for the Labour movement, as well as a reflection of the greater political unity created by the new unionist ideas and the wide political alliance organised by Thorne. The Union organised a strike headquarters in a West Ham shop they rented and formed a permanent strike sub-committee of Executive and local members.

It was clear that the West Ham Council needed to weaken union power in the area to reduce rates and recreate a flexible workforce.

The Daily News said:

"They have commenced the task of smashing the educational machine which has been the pride of the borough. They have attacked the scale of salaries and called upon the teachers to accept reductions of the most substantial character. Naturally the teachers have objected and having one of the best trades unions in existence, they promise to offer a resistance of a very effective kind...."<sup>15</sup>

The Union Executive felt that the high rates led education to be sacrificed, and that this almost inevitable response could only be solved by a new national system of rating, and Government grants to heavily-rated areas. Teachers were the most readily accessible way to reduce local educational expenditure. The tone of regret that is present in the writings of the Executive of the period was outweighed in the borough by an insistent and vital Unionism. This Unionism was locally in alliance with Labour organisations. Yoxall, recognized this in a large public meeting on the 17th April. He made a clear statement about teachers' natural allies —

"...There were present that night in addition to so many working-class parents, a number of leaders of labour organisations. The teachers who were appealing for fair pay that night ..... were not teachers of the favoured, fashionable and costly schools of the country. They were teachers in the schools of the people, and when they stood up for those schools, they stood up for the people and for the children of the people".<sup>16</sup>

He emphasised this by referring to his correspondence with Labour organisations about secondary education for the working classes, and the fact that most teachers were the children of the working class.

By April 27th, sixty teachers were threatened with dismissal for refusing to accept the new grades, and the Union agreed to pay them the higher grade for five years after dismissal. The Executive did decide that if the Council was willing to continue the old scales for its present employees, they would be willing to accept the new grades for new teachers. This compromise would have created an impossible situation for the Council, who would have won in principle but in practice would still have had an education service it regarded as too expensive. As the Tribune had said, 'what does it matter how good or bad the teacher is, as long as he's cheap'..!

The Council itself was split, although unequally, between those who wished for this 'cheaper and more efficient' service and those, educationists and labour supporters, who demanded a decent education service and the fair treatment of its workforce. A local by-election address at the time illustrates this — an Education committee member, Duncan Best, opposed the "socialist scheme of equal pay for unequal ability" with the return of a grading system, which would, by recognising "aptitude for teaching intelligence, knowledge and diligence.... promote( ) efficiency and will gradually effect a real economy".<sup>17</sup>

In other words, this dispute was about the right to operate unions and the employers' need to operate a cheap, flexible workforce, hiring and firing at will, to provide a cheap education service. Local NUT Associations throughout the country gave messages of support to the

strikers, and some agreed to a levy,<sup>18</sup> by their actions recognising the importance of this general conflict, exemplified at West Ham.

Worsening conditions in the schools, with insufficient staff and overcrowded conditions<sup>19</sup> led the Council to give their School Management Committee chairman the right to transfer the teaching staff from one school to another. The Council also continued their standby tactic of 'divide and rule' by allowing head teachers to remain on the old scale, and increasing uncertificated teachers' salaries. The effect of the former action was to increase the number of teachers handing in their dismissal notices. Young pupil teachers were given control of large senior classes and infant teachers were taking boys' classes. Married women teachers, who customarily were dismissed on marriage, were invited by the Council to be re-appointed to the service. Although Labour councillors forced the Council to agree that the 5 year contract was worth as little as the 'detriment' clause, it was even stated in the Council meeting<sup>20</sup> that a teacher banned from teaching in any London County Council school had been appointed.

The reported discussions of the Council made it plain that their purpose was "to break the tyranny of the Union".<sup>21</sup> That this was the intention is further suggested by a member of the Council visiting young women teachers in the borough, and promising them seven years guaranteed service, with a heavy money indemnity in the event of failure to carry out the agreement. The only condition being "that the teacher should withdraw from the National Union of Teachers".<sup>22</sup>

By early June, fifty seven teachers had been dismissed, and fifty eight had resigned. Most of the teachers (including all of the men teachers) had obtained other appointments. The Special (or strike) Committee was endeavouring to keep the remaining teachers at work, but resignations increased in number when 'blackleg' or emergency teachers



were appointed. Support was regularly coming in by way of local associations motions, regional associations and the always favourable local presses. The Chicago Teachers' Federation also sent a telegram of support.

A major source of help for the teachers were the labour councillors on the West Ham Council.<sup>23</sup> Although they were constantly defeated, they were publicly reported in the Stratford Express, Evening Chronicle and the Schoolmaster. They worked closely with the teachers - for instance, on the 'class size' figures in the schools or in the particular cases of dismissals etc. One of this group, Councillor Hayday, made an impassioned speech during the dispute about the council's policy.

"Too much power had been placed in the hands of one man. If 150 applications were received in response to the advertisements, he would have power to immediately discharge 150 known members of the Union .. There were councillors who cared nothing about education if only they could save salaries. He had heard Councillor C. Mansfield say 'Sack them all'. They wanted to cripple the legitimate aspirations of those teachers who thought it right to join their Union for mutual protection.... Councillor Byford had said he was going to destroy the Labour element on the council .... People talked about olive branches. The Union would find they had to fight reactionary Councils, just as the trade unions had to fight employers or Trusts. They would have to become more aggressive".<sup>24</sup>

Members of the majority group of councillors were informed by the Clerk to the Council, Dr. Hilleary, that it could not offer special five year contracts with teachers to encourage them to leave the NUT and continue work, that is 'blackleg'. The contract with the teachers could not be binding on any future Council, and the Labour Group were definitely opposed to it. Yet contracts were still offered by a Council desperate to ease the problem of classroom overcrowding and teacher resignations. An attempt by the Council to advertise for 600 teachers in Scotland, met with unexpected failure when the Educational News, their journal, refused the advert out of solidarity.<sup>25</sup>

The government gave no public encouragement to the Council yet when questioned by an NUT M.P., Yoxall, in Parliament, suggested that the over-crowding was due to seasonal problems and generally small schools!

The Education Committee meeting of 10th July contained a heated debate around a resolution from the South West Ham Free Church Council, which seemed to take the NUT position that "the new financial regulations should not apply to teachers already engaged."<sup>26</sup>

This position was unacceptable to the majority of the Council, and yet as a Labour councillor pointed out

"There was hardly one trade union in ten which would settle the question on such a basis as the teachers were prepared to accept. A trade union would want concessions for those who came after as well as for those immediately affected, but the teachers were not urging that."<sup>27</sup>

That point reveals the differences between the NUT and the Labour allies. It must have been a source of discomfort for the Labour movement to support an organisation that said it was fighting for a Labour principle, the right to unionise, yet was willing to compromise from the beginning on just that principle. It would allow NUT members to be employed at a lower than standard rate.

Indeed one councillor, Jones, went on to say that he thought "the teachers were giving half their case away". Further he suggested:

"So far as they (the Labour members) were concerned, they were not there to advocate merely the case of the teachers, but the teachers belonged to an organisation, and they had a perfect right to belong to it, and therefore had a perfect right to follow any tactics organised by that body. He had no particular love for teachers as a class ... He was fighting for the teachers on principle."<sup>28</sup>

The support the teachers were getting from the Labour movement was based on the principle of unionism, and yet it obviously rankled some members of that movement that the teachers were insecure in their use of principle, and made difficult allies.

The blithe disregard for the increasingly overcrowded conditions in the schools was bolstered by the Board of Education's lack of concern, to the dismay of the Labour group who constantly expected the Board to fulfil its grant aid conditions, and withdraw the grant on the grounds of the overcrowding or lack of teachers. Though the majority councillors may have been concerned in private, in the publicly-recorded Education Committee they voted steadfastly to continue, Councillor Hutt stating that

"a good many other public bodies were going to follow West Ham's example, and it was a fight in which West Ham must pull the chestnuts out of the fire for someone else."<sup>29</sup>

suggests that it was not only the NUT that was getting countryside support, and that West Ham was not exceptional in its work conditions, and that any one of a number of local councils could have begun this particular dispute. It happened to be West Ham because of a particular set of conditions - the strength of the Union locally and the recent election of a strong conservative and Ratepayers group (The Municipal Alliance party) on the issue of the high local rates.

To replace the often long-serving teachers (whose number was increased by 200 after a Union meeting on the 18th) the Council was recruiting where it could. Although it was tacitly supported by the Board of Education, who constantly denied in Parliament that the Code was being broken by the overcrowding,<sup>30</sup> the Council came under attack for the kind of teacher recruited. Because these teachers were designated as 'on supply', the Chairman of the Education Committee refused to give details of their background, testimonials and credentials to the opposition councillors. If any enquiries were to be made, they would only do so after the strike had been broken.<sup>31</sup> The zealots on the Committee saw the struggle as 'the right to govern' - consequently, hiring

new staff, transferring staff from school to school, overcrowding the classrooms, was their affair, not the teachers'. The notion of unionism, and even arbitration (constantly mentioned in the Committee) was alien to them. Councillor Best, a recent by-election winner on this issue, said

"They could meet their own teachers if they came to them, and there was no reasonable request they might make that would not be granted, that course had always been taken when a deputation had been received. If the teachers had come to the Education Committee in the first case, everything might have been settled."<sup>32</sup>

If Councils changed their minds, contradicted previous practice or ignored previously agreed employment classes, that was seen by this group as their prerogative.

A Church of England vicar, a councillor,<sup>33</sup> suggested a meeting with 'their own teachers'. The very question of national union recognition is absent from even this moderate solution - a fundamental precept of unionism, recognition, was ignored. Arbitration, even, was overwhelmingly rejected by the Council on July 23rd.

By late July, the dispute had been growing for three months, and the number of teachers resigning was increasing weekly. At the suggestion of the Head Teachers' Association, the Education Committee proposed a

"round-table conference .... between the representatives of the Education Committee and the accredited representatives of the teachers".<sup>34</sup>

This formula, which excluded the term 'National Union of Teachers' yet could include the NUT locally and the national executive members, was acceptable to most of the Committee - to the Labour Councillors because it allowed no collapse of union principle, and to the moderates, because it allowed them to save face, and yet defy the zealots. The Chairman of the Education Committee, who was also the Deputy Mayor, was totally opposed, but seemed in the week July 16th to 23rd to have lost control over the moderates. The latter group would in 'fair weather' support the

right to manage but had been defeated by the teachers' united action.

The next Education Committee (29th July) was completely given over to the selection of the representatives to the Conference - the Mayor was controversially appointed Chairman of the Conference, then eventually a ballot provided the remainder of the group. The meeting took so long to decide its representatives because of the continuing tussle between Labour and the hardliners, with the new group of moderates also hoping to be represented. Eventually, after several ballots, it was decided to include elected and appointed members, mainly of moderate and hardline persuasion. There was no obvious Labour representation.

The conference began at 11 a.m. on Wednesday, July 31st and lasted for nearly ten hours. A settlement was achieved on the issue of salaries and scales which for the Union was a victory. The first impression gained from the Schoolmaster and West Ham newspapers after the strike, is one of conciliation, and a concern for the re-establishment of a cordial relationship. The Stratford Express<sup>35</sup> declared the trouble a mere misunderstanding.

"There need be no bitterness now. There have been honest misunderstandings and a pretty hard fight in consequence. The misunderstandings are cleared up, and in this country we don't bear malice after a fight".

The Schoolmaster<sup>36</sup> said that "A friendly interchange of views - a round-table conference - was all that was required to secure peace". These naive, if harmless, pleasantries were useful at the time to heal the wounds of the combatants but they do not explain the significance of the dispute. A local authority had for the first time, since the Portsmouth dispute eleven years before, been successfully fought on a point of principle. The strength of the Union was introduced to a new generation of teachers.<sup>37</sup>

In its appraisal of the dispute, the Schoolmaster pointed the way to a policy which the NUT, in the actions of its Executive, invariably followed in the future.

"The West Ham struggle marks a new phase in the history of the Union. It was a fight between a great Union on the one hand, and one of the largest and most important Education Authorities .. on the other ... We trust that in any future disputes Education Authorities will see the value of calling into conference the Leaders of the Union at the beginning of a struggle. We are confident that if such a course be adopted it will lead to an earlier and more satisfactory settlement".<sup>38</sup>

The creation of a partnership in educational decision making, myth and reality, must stem from this period even though there is little evidence to sustain it as other than a reassurance to the two battered parties and a Union Executive eager to avoid further trouble.

The Union changed - sometimes in more overt ways than others. Firstly, the Special Committee, a new institution, had successfully organized a strike, acting as a direct link between the Union Executive, the West Ham NUT Executive, and the local teachers. It was constantly at work in the borough, operating from the strike headquarters. It had held

"no less than 80 meetings... including public meetings, conferences and committee meetings. In addition, hundreds of teachers were personally interviewed by members of the Committee, who at the same time dealt with the Executive and Committee work that would have fallen to their share in the ordinary course".<sup>39</sup>

Yet under this great strain and in an almost unprecedented situation for the teachers' organization, it had to

"formulate a policy that would not only fit the West Ham fight, but would be a precedent for future fights. They had to take strong lines, yet act with the greatest care. A false move might have caused confusion and defeat".<sup>40</sup>

The actions of unionism, and not just tentative ideas, are the legacy of this dispute. The Union defended unionism against a strong employer attack. It had centralized discipline and leadership, and the

local initiative, morale-building and tactics of an industrial union.

The Union avoided a special levy for the strike but wary of the future, decided to increase the subscription to the Union, mainly for the purpose of strengthening the sustentation fund - the fund from which members are paid in a local dispute.<sup>41</sup>

Like the Portsmouth School Board, the West Ham Education Committee was fighting for the right to manage the local education service without obstruction. Obstruction to them meant the local association of teachers as only by reducing wages could the books be balanced and the rates kept down. If councillors wavered in their determination to fight the teachers they could be replaced by the local Conservative/Ratepayer alliance. To smash the Union was their only logical course as this was the force that was trying to maintain wage levels and determine council policy. Council policy was not only to reduce general wage levels for teachers but by breaking the recognised scales, pay teachers according to their own criteria creating a flexible workforce. As much as possible they used the divisions between the teachers against them, putting headteachers against the class teacher, the certificated against the uncertificated, and the men against the women teachers. This was not so difficult sometimes as the number of teachers in the NUT was only about a quarter (in this period) of all teachers.<sup>42</sup> Large sections of the teachers were non-Unionised and used as a source of cheap, supply labour; the use of married women teachers fits this category, constantly excluded or reintroduced to the teacher labour market when a temporary shortage of teachers occurred.

The moderation of the teachers' union faced with management hostility and the concentration of executive powers in one individual is consistent with the Portsmouth dispute. To have forced the Union to open a strike headquarters and to delegate Executive members to oversee

the strike operation was a sign of the total intransigence of the employer not of a natural militancy or strong syndicalist position within the Executive and membership. West Ham was the first of a number of strikes to occur mainly in the next decade where the Union had to fight just like any other Union. The immediate effect of a strike is that the employer saves money on salaries and so new tactics of struggle had to be devised in the Union. A natural source of allies was the parents of the working class elementary children and during strikes or disputes, after West Ham, a series of appeals and meetings are addressed to them. In West Ham, it was no coincidence that the strikers had the support of the Labour movement. West Ham South had been won by Keir Hardie of the Independent Labour Party in 1892. Will Thorne regained the seat for Labour, the year before the strike, and he stood for an educational policy that was in advance of the Union's own position. The West Ham Trades Council was the key to his local support and the base for the teacher strike support. At the time, the local alliance was unusual but it had elements that were to surface again in 1919. Thorne represented the new unionism of the militant manual workers' unions who were often opposed by the older craft Unions. Some Labour councillors supported the teachers but they did not like them or their attitudes; it was a question of class interest, protection of the education system and a response to the employer's anti-Unionism. All for one, one for all. The problem which continued was although individual teachers were socialists or ILP supporters, the Union seemed to the Labour movement to be opportunistic in its appeals for support.

The only clear policy ever shown by the Board of Education up to 1919 and post 1921 was the policy it followed at West Ham. It did practically nothing. The question of inefficiency, one of the grounds



for its intervention, was never defined and in this case, never raised by the Board. Both the Labour group and the teachers expected the Board to intervene but it consistently denied that West Ham was breaking its regulations. One surmises that West Ham council was following a policy which the Board approved and that was breaking the power of the Union and lowering the price the teachers could charge for their labour. The Board seemed to care very little for the quality of education and, as in West Ham, it always seemed to surprise teachers and parents by its tardiness in intervening. The pressure that was building up in local authority areas was to continue in the next few years as, due to economies, Exchequer grants-in-aid were effectively reduced and teacher salaries were the main way in which L.E.A.'s could save money. It was expected throughout the West Ham strike that either other authorities would quickly join in with similar demands or wait until the teachers were beaten before doing so.<sup>43</sup>

First at Portsmouth and then more significantly at West Ham, teachers had shown that they could organise and fight. Instead of disunity and factionalism, they had created a solidarity between themselves, with teachers in other parts of the country and with the local Trades Council and ILP councillors.<sup>44</sup> West Ham became a symbol of hope to many teachers and the basis for future action in the later salary campaign.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER 2

1. Durman, William 'Portsmouth Education'.
2. Bransdon, T. 'Early Education in Portsmouth' in National Association of Headteachers Conference Souvenir 1931.
3. Hampshire Telegraph Jan. 30, 1892.
4. " " Feb. 29, 1892.
5. " " " "
6. " " Feb. 22, 1892.
7. " " Feb. 15, 1896.
8. " " Feb. 22, 1896.
9. " " Feb. 22, 1896.
10. " " March 21, 1896.
11. The Schoolmaster Feb 29, 1896.
12. The concentration of teachers in urban areas must be a significant factor in their unionisation. Their problems were the same as other white collar local government employees i.e. Bain, G.S. (1968) 'The Growth of White Collar Unionism' OUP.
13. Radice, G. & L. (1974) 'Will Thorne, Constructive Militant' Allen & Urwin, p. 54.
14. Schoolmaster April 20, 1907.
15. Schoolmaster April, 20, 1907.
16. Schoolmaster April, 20, 1907.
17. Schoolmaster April 27, 1907.
18. Portsmouth was one of these associations. Schoolmaster May 4, 1907.
19. One of the worst examples - a single teacher teaching 130 children in a room built for 70 children. Schoolmaster May 11, 1907.

20. Schoolmaster May 25, 1907.
21. Schoolmaster May 25, 1907.
22. Schoolmaster June 8, 1907.
23. These Councillors were allied to the local M.P., Will Thorne, and influenced by the industrial unionism he represented and his great championing of a free, secular education system. In 1905, he had won support at the TUC on a resolution demanding free meals and medical inspection for all children. Simon (65)p. 286.
24. Schoolmaster June 29, 1907.
25. 600 teachers could be an almost complete compliment of new teachers to replace the old. The Dundee Advertiser was also carrying this advert.
26. Schoolmaster July 13, 1907.
27. Schoolmaster July 13, 1907.
28. Schoolmaster July 13, 1907.
29. Schoolmaster July 13, 1907.
30. On one occasion on the same day as issuing regulations fixing the maximum secondary school class size at 35. Schoolmaster July 20, 1907.
31. Schoolmaster July 20, 1907 - Chairman "Later it will be our duty to go more carefully into these appointments".
32. ....
33. Schoolmaster July 20, 1907.
34. Schoolmaster July 27, 1907.
35. August 1907.
36. Schoolmaster Aug. 10, 1907.
37. Dorothy Thompson 'Professional Solidarity' etc. Chap. V  
1896 NUT members 367,93; 1907 NUT members 62,161.

38. Schoolmaster Aug. 10, 1907.
39. NUT Report 1908, pp. LXI.
40. Schoolmaster Aug. 10, 1907.
41. Similar difficulties to the West Ham situation were present in different parts of the country "it is experiences like these which convince the Executive that, short of a considerable sustentation fund, the teachers in no administrative area of the country can be safe" NUT Report 1908, pp. XIV.
42. 1901 Census Returns 280,345 teachers 1907 62, 161 (Certificate & graduate elementary teachers).
43. A Labour Council in Aberdare, S.Wales created a dispute in 1907 again on the issue of unionisation and working conditions. However the same process at West Ham was present at Aberdare - the teachers' ties to the Labour movement were strengthened by contact between the younger, left wing elements.
44. It wasn't a coincidence that a 1908 Annual Conference (NUT) resolution on class size said it was necessary "to secure the cooperation of the Trades Congress, Labour Representation Committees, the ILP, the Cooperative Societies, Trade Unions and any other organisation interested in the welfare of the children to bring about this urgent reform," NUT Report LXXVII.

### 3. RURAL TEACHERS REBELLION

It has been noted that in the rural areas the teachers' plight was exacerbated by the poor salaries, old schools and control by farmers and the local clergyman. They were servants in a social system that was hierarchical and immutable. They were teachers of the poor, drawn from the poor by virtue of varied educational experience. They were often local people, trained as pupil teachers or taken as supplementaries,<sup>1</sup> and might be running the school with their marriage partner.<sup>2</sup> It was quite common (at least in 1851 in the East Riding) for teachers to have other supplementary jobs, such as postman, shopkeeper or Registrar of Births and Deaths.<sup>3</sup> It has already been remarked upon about the extra duties required of these teachers by the Church of England. The schools, even if purpose built, were quite likely to have no artificial lighting, inadequate ventilation and heating and no running water.<sup>4</sup> They were unlikely to be regularly cleaned and repairs were tardy.

It is not surprising that these teachers should have in some cases felt closer to the agricultural labourers they served rather than the farmers, landowners or clergy who excluded them socially. Sometimes the teacher was involved in the constant attempts by these labourers to create Unions. Strange, a teacher in Leintwardine, Herefordshire had allied himself with the labourers' cause and helped to organise West of England labourers in a Union.<sup>5</sup> Later, John Arnett and Tom Higdon had joined with the East Anglian labourers. Arnett was a member of the Executive of the Eastern Counties Union and survived the disastrous strike in 1910.<sup>6</sup> Higdon joined the Union when a schoolmaster at Wood Dalling in Norfolk in 1907,<sup>7</sup> and was to become a major force in the Union organisation in

branches and on Parish Councils. He was also part of the new socialist revival which took place in the Union after its defeat in 1910.<sup>8</sup>

It was the rural areas which gave the teachers countrywide a boost. The first and hardest battle in a newly declared salaries campaign, the Herefordshire strike, was begun in 1913, and the Burston School strike, a local event with a national impact, energised the rural teachers and the growing link with organised labour, in the Trade Unions and the I.L.P.

'Tom Higdon and his wife, Anne Higdon, were at the centre of the labourers' fight in Norfolk and it is no coincidence, that, as teachers, they fought for better schooling as well. In Wood Dalling and after their compulsory transfer, at Burston, they stood for a better education for the labourers' children, and in the records of their fight, we can see the difficulties of the rural teacher. At Wood Dalling, they persistently made the local Attendance Officer bring children into school from farming work. Tom Higdon even pulled boys away from farmers using them in the fields and Mrs. Higdon encouraged the boys not to help the local Harriers. They provided dry clothing for the children on rainy days and often sought permission to use the school fire to dry the childrens' clothing.<sup>9</sup> They had protected the Infants teacher (most probably a supplementary teacher) from a manager's complaint and with the aid of the NUT. They constantly asked for visits by the County Medical Officer or the village doctor to the children, especially with the recurrent whooping cough epidemic. They invited the Sanitary and Building Inspectors to the school. The school log book is a record of a running battle undertaken by the teachers against the managers. The managers, were, in the main, local farmers and Tom Higdon provoked them by encouraging the Attendance Officer to

visit them and by increasing school expenditure. Trouble came to a head when Higdon, involved in the organisation of the local Agricultural Workers' Union, had helped to win a clean sweep of the local Parish Council by the labourers, but the school managers were still dominated by the farmers. Although the school regularly received good reports from the H.M.I., the Norfolk Education Committee (also mainly farmers or landlords) sustained a charge against the Higdens of referring to the Managers as 'liars'. With some fainthearted help from the NUT legal department, the Higdens were transferred to Burston School in 1911.

In March, 1913, the local farmworkers, whom he was again helping to organise in the surrounding villages,<sup>10</sup> asked him to help in the Parish Council elections and again the labourers won control, expelling the farmers and (most important) humiliating the new Vicar of Burston. The Parish Council was an active one. It removed the Vicar and the Churchwardens from the Charity Committee, kept the farmers from encroaching on public footpaths<sup>11</sup> and agitated for new village housing. Again, the question of rates and representation came to the fore. Higdon argued that new houses were needed and that the Council represented the ratepayers; an argument addressed to farmers who suggested otherwise. To Higdon, rents were a form of indirect rates.<sup>12</sup>

Apart from the Parish Council elections, two other issues soured relations between the Higdens and the Managers. Firstly, the Vicar was always trying to pressure the Higdens to be churchgoers not chapelgoers, as an example to the labourers and their children. The Higdens were probably Primitive Methodists. Secondly, the two teachers continued to battle for better school conditions. They were in trouble for closing the school in the whooping cough epidemic and the Managers even wrote to the Education Committee complaining that Mrs. Higdon lit

the schoolroom fire without their permission. Also "Faults of lighting, heating, drainage and the Schoolhouse pump"<sup>13</sup> were complained about. Their dismissal this time occurred over a number of charges, all of them scratched together but sufficient for the Education Committee to act upon.<sup>14</sup>

The case of the Higdens illustrates the feudal conditions in which teachers and the other village workers lived, and how socialist teachers and the new agricultural Unionism was seen as a serious threat to the social fabric of the village hierarchy. Each time the teachers complained to the Managers or argued with the Vicar, there is a perceptible sundering of the system. This was to be redoubled by the growth of the Eastern Counties Union and the Parish Council elections.

What made the Burston case echo throughout the Teachers' Union and the wider Trade Union Movement was the result of their dismissals. The pupils went on strike after their teachers were given two days to leave the school and a fortnight to leave their tied cottage.<sup>15</sup> A public meeting on the village green resulted in a resolution that the 'parents would not send their children to school before justice was done'.

What happened next can best be illustrated from the minutes of the Norfolk Education Committee. During the course of the next eighteen months, the Committee was inundated by resolutions and appeals from trade union and socialist bodies, including the British Socialist Party, the Norwich ILP branch, the County Association of the NUT, the Norwich and the Lowestoft Trades and Labour Councils, the National Union of Railwaymen (2 branches), the Manchester and Salford Labour Party and 54 branches (and the Executive) of the Agricultural Labourers Union.<sup>16</sup> The latter were the mainstay of the Higdon's support and reveal the organic links that had developed between them and the rural workers.



George Edwards, the Union leader, was one of two labour councillors on the County Council (though, in name, at this stage, he was an Advanced Liberal),<sup>17</sup> and in his autobiography, mentions that he felt the teachers had been victimised and was assured of "...the devotion of the people to the teachers and .. that the teachers and the parents of the children were fighting a just battle".<sup>18</sup> He warned the Council of the consequences of their action in words that were to come true rapidly — "The whole great Trade Union Movement would take the matter up and then, they would probably have another school built."<sup>19</sup> Parents were regularly fined for not sending the children to the old school and instead a school was started in an old building with the teachers fed by the parents. This was in such a state that it was regularly condemned by Sanitary and Medical Officers but the District Council refused to act because of the strong feeling in the village.<sup>20</sup> Local attempts were made to break the strike and the strike school by harassing the parents and evicting one of the vicar's tenants who supported it, but as this was going on in the village, nationally it became a focus of attention, symbolising a break for social and political freedom by teachers and workers. Large meetings were held on the village green as visitors came in from all over East Anglia and London.<sup>21</sup> They were addressed by Socialist speakers from the ILP or the Daily Herald, like George Lansbury or Bruce Glasier. Large demonstrations by the Railwaymen and the Agricultural workers drew union support and bands from London. Public meetings addressed by the Higdon's and the children were held in London.

A new Strike school was built by Union donations and its opening was the scene of another demonstration on May 13th, 1917. The railwaymen and villagers were addressed by their leaders, by John Scurr

of the Herald and by Sylvia Pankhurst. It was intended to be the first step towards a 'permanent Socialist Educational Institution' and the first 'Trades Union School'.<sup>22</sup> As John Scurr reported it in the Herald, the opening of the school was tied up in the visitors' minds with the revolutionary changes in Russia, part of the same movement. They came from all over Britain, members of Cooperative Societies, Miner's Lodges, Railway Union branches, the ILP educational societies and socialist societies.<sup>23</sup> The strike was a great symbol of what could be achieved by the working classes; as Scurr put it, the 'first school built by the working classes'. The Higdon's were part of it and although they were described as 'individuals' they were viewed as the first in a wave of educational changes involving teachers and workers.<sup>24</sup>

Overlapping with the Burston strike, though not so evidently symbolic as Burston, was the beginning of the NUT's national salary campaign. In the large towns and cities, the teachers' associations had managed with difficulty to force the local education committees into offering better salary scales, yet even there the control by ratepayer councillors of municipal budgets and the declining value of Exchequer grants caused sharp conflicts. In the rural districts, teacher associations found it extremely difficult to talk to or convince the landlords and farmers on the County Education Committees. Conflict between the teachers and their local employers grew. In many areas teachers were not on salary scales but fixed wages and they were under extreme pressure from the post-1900 inflation which had grown to 20% by 1912 (9% between 1910 and 1913).

In the past, the Union had tried to influence backward or recalcitrant authorities by 'blacklisting' them in the Schoolmaster, a major source of job advertising. Applicants were invited to enquire of the Union if a local authority was in dispute over salaries. This

policy was being rendered ineffective by the increasing number of teachers, outside the Union, ineligible to join. Another policy was a recommended list of pro-education candidates for local elections but this, too, was increasingly ineffective due to the homogeneity of mainstream Liberal and Conservative municipal policy or the monopoly of Conservative party control in the shires.

At the Annual Conference in 1913 at Weston-Super-Mare, the Union had adopted a recommended standard scale of salaries for teachers and the Executive had been instructed to start a campaign to achieve it. A Special Salaries' Committee was set up, composed of teachers, headteachers and Union officers, which was to act as a catalyst to local associations. It urged them on, providing facts, cost of living statistics, petitions and recommended procedures in organising a local campaign. It was well understood in the Union, and a reflection on its history, that

"the Local or County Associations must be the unit of action, if any good is to accrue, as a full knowledge of the local circumstances and difficulties is the first condition of success. The time and method of action can only be best known to those who are in close touch with the district and with all the local conditions."<sup>25</sup>

This was a similar approach to that of other craft unions and quite dissimilar to the 'new unions' with their clear mobilisation around a demand on hours or wages. It also recognised the Union strength, that some local associations in their strong organisation and industry could create precedents or sound examples for other, weaker associations. The strong encouraged the weak and the role of the central Executive was to funnel experience and tactics. The Schoolmaster provided a new 'Enthusiasts Column' with written in suggestions on tactics and the enrolment of members.<sup>26</sup> All this was very necessary as it was the Union's suspicion, remarked upon during the West Ham strike, that the education authorities were about to combine to further reduce wages.<sup>27</sup>

It proposed to support the local education authorities if they petitioned the Government to increase Exchequer grants for education if it was stipulated that a proportion of the grant was reserved for improving pay and staffing ratios. So an employer combination and the rising cost of living were the sparks which set off the campaign but it was grounded in the poor conditions many teachers endured. The NUT Tenure

Committee recognised a further spark to action in the high level of industrial strikes taking place nationally among miners, railwaymen, cotton spinners and dockers. The committee saw in the salary campaign

"a widespread movement corresponding to the recent unrest in the industrial sphere. Attempts to economise at the expense of the teacher are giving place to agitations on the part of the teachers to secure more adequate salaries and better increments".<sup>28</sup>

By 1915, the Salaries Committee reported that nearly half of the LEA s (321) had given improved salaries as the result of the campaign, mainly in the rural areas with class teachers benefitting most.

Improvements were sometimes very little and hard fought. The only new advantage the Union had was that there was a temporary shortage of teachers after 1910 as the old pupil-teacher recruitment was being phased out and the new secondary school recruits had not yet developed substantially. In some parts of the country there was a considerable fall in new recruits to teaching.<sup>29</sup> The Union also welcomed the concern expressed in Trades Councils or The Herald at the overcrowding and bad classroom conditions which prevailed in many places. It had been made clear at Weston-Super-Mare that the teachers had to go out and state their case to the public to enlist their support.<sup>30</sup>

There was also a recognition that this time the Union would choose to strike (or allow teachers to resign) in pursuit of its claims and not, as before, in reaction to employer action - a campaign that

would take "the teachers out when the authorities were not willing to pay them decent salaries".<sup>31</sup>

It was of little consideration if they were likened to the Miners' Federation or railway workers because, a Schoolmaster editorial pointed out, a policy of successfully defending a minimum wage was exactly what the doctors and lawyers did,<sup>32</sup> and why shouldn't they?"

This was what happened in Herefordshire, a notoriously backward county in its education service. The dispute in Herefordshire brought the tension between rates, councillors and the Board of Education in the schools to wide public notice. The overwhelming evidence that members were being 'sweated' in the county left most newspapers with little other than favourable comment on the teachers' action. Since 1904, the certificated teachers had sent 'memorials, deputations and direct communications',<sup>33</sup> to the County Council appealing for salary increases. Their situation was grave, combatting inflation and the fact that wages in the county were about one-third below a country-wide average. Many of the school managers had tried to help their schoolteachers over the years without success. This tended to make the Herefordshire clergy, including the Bishop of Hereford, support the teachers. One, the Reverend William Hapton, wrote to Yoxall, the Union Secretary, with his support —

"We have done our utmost for years past to induce the Local Education Authority to deal more liberally with teachers but simply in vain. They are paying now more than 20 pounds per annum less than we were paying teachers on our staff before the Act of 1902 came into operation - and until quite recently were paying 46 pounds per annum less than we paid... Anything by which we can influence the Local Education Authority I feel sure we shall do, as we have done since 1905, when they commenced their present underpaid treatment of our staff."<sup>34</sup>

The support from the school managers and therefore the Church was to be important as the Council asked them to evict striking teachers from schoolhouses, which they refused to do.

In 1913, a final appeal was made by the Union to the Council for revised salaries and for a salary scale (newly adopted by the Weston-Super-Mare Conference). Ingeniously, and not without precedent, the Local Education Authority had a standing order which ruled out any discussion of a salary scale, so the appeal was made impossible. The Council did decide to enquire into teachers' salaries in comparable areas as a means of forestalling further teacher action. This inquiry was seen as a delaying tactic by the teachers who then handed in their resignations to the Union, most of which were to be effective from January 1st, 1914 (the headteachers were on 3 months notice and they would join the strike later).

The Union opened a strike headquarters in Hereford, a central position in the County although not itself affected by the impending strike. Initially a hundred resignations were handed in. On November 8th, a further thirty teachers were added to the list. In the following weeks, Union members travelled Herefordshire encouraging all the non-unionised teachers to join, so by the middle of November, another sixty-nine teachers gave in their notice. It was reported in the Schoolmaster that, in total, two hundred and twenty nine teachers struck (or had the intention of doing so in the case of headteachers) in January. This consisted of seventy-nine headmasters, thirty-eight headmistresses, six class masters, thirteen class mistresses and ninety-three other teachers.<sup>35</sup> It is not clear if all these teachers were certificated teachers but it has to be assumed so as the Union did not mention any other type of teacher yet in a rural area one would expect to see a considerable number of pupil teachers or supplementary teachers. They may have been temporarily protected by the Union with strike pay although they were ineligible to join.

The question at stake in the disputes with local education authorities was often the very existence and recognition of the Union. As was common throughout the salary campaign in the rural and town areas, the Union was barely recognised by the employers. The NUT Secretary sent a letter to the Herefordshire Authority asking to state the Union case before it, in return the Executive was invited to a meeting in the Shirehall in November. The Secretary of the County Association was also invited to a meeting. Both groups attended together but the Authority would not receive the local teachers with the Union Executive. The teachers then left. The Education Committee's tactic was to divide the teachers.

The Union was fairly confident that the places of the striking teachers could not be filled. This must have been a reflection of the shortage of teachers in 1913/1914, the strong strike fund and the determined effort the Union made to advertise its case nationally. Its confidence was well-placed. The Authority was to advertise widely but by January, 1914, had only recruited five teachers. It had tried offering headships to junior staff but they had refused. It had, like West Ham earlier, advertised in Scotland but the Educational Institute of Scotland, the NUT's equivalent, made strong representations against any Scottish teacher taking a Herefordshire post —

"Any Scottish teacher .... will surely not give away the professional position so staunchly maintained across the Border by applying for a post in Hereford".<sup>36</sup>

Just before the strike was due to start, the salary enquiry set up by the Education Committee had reported back. It had been chaired by a Colonel Decies, who was obviously the linchpin of the employers' resistance.

Decies said that the strike had not influenced the report but he then suggested that small increases should be given to some teachers. The Committee had used other rural counties to compare its salaries with — Cambridgeshire, Worcestershire, Wiltshire, Shropshire, Westmoreland and Buckinghamshire. Not surprisingly it found that in one or the other of these counties, for a male or female headteacher or class teacher, lower wages could be produced which showed Herefordshire in a good light. However, some increases were suggested, on the basis of the 'teacher's service, capability and character' as ascertained by the Authority. Under no circumstances could a salary scale be agreed, though.

Throughout the strike the teachers received a favourable press nationally, and comments made in editorials and articles reveal the watershed the salary campaign was making to a national assessment of the education system. The Daily News in an editorial headed 'Sweated Teachers' raised questions about education in Herefordshire which should have been addressed more widely

"[The Hereford Local Authority] does not want good education; it does not want any real education. It is compelled by law to administer a system of education, and it does it as stingily and badly as it dare. Clearly the appeal to reason and to the sanctity of education cannot affect such bodies. They can only feel coercion. Surely through its control of finance the Board of Education has power to end a gross scandal.<sup>37</sup>

It was only because the spotlight had turned so fully on to Herefordshire that its miserliness had been exposed and its 'cult of economy'<sup>38</sup> accused of endangering efficiency. The other rural areas were escaping the same degree of opprobrium though equally deserving as Herefordshire. But the issue of underpaid teachers, cheapness or efficiency and the nation's education system was being raised fully by the campaign and by the actions of the teachers. The Yorkshire Post, for example, raised



the fundamental issue of financing, pointing out that rates were increasing and grants-in-aid were shrinking and only a new Government policy could help to alter this declining or inverse spiral.<sup>39</sup> The Birmingham Post focussed on the changes that the Union was making for itself and its class of white collar workers, it foresaw a new industrial arena for disputes similar to that of the engineering, mining or railway industries. It attached great significance to the fact (albeit in ignorance of West Ham) that

"This is the first occasion on which such a Union as this resorted to the strike weapon. In the noise of industrial warfare, in the clamour over the wages of artisans, we are inclined to forget the humbler members of the professional classes. For them, too, the battle of existence is growing harder and harder. In many ways it is true to say that they are far worse off than the men of the industrial Unions. But so far they have not attempted combination."<sup>40</sup>

The Observer was interested in the working conditions of the teachers (low pay, poor promotion prospects, no salary scale and often tied to a local authority) and the fact that the strike, and the Union behind it, was successful yet the local authority was obliged to provide 'adequate educational facilities'. It gave Herefordshire only a week to recruit new teachers or settle with the strikers. It expected the latter.<sup>41</sup>

The question of 'adequate education' should have been pressing to the Education Committee. It had to be pointed out to them, informally by the Board that they would lose the grant-in-aid (a 'serious financial loss') if they allowed the schools to lack proper staffing or meet far less than the necessary four hundred meetings a year.<sup>42</sup>

Indeed, the Board's Secretary, in private correspondence, was amazed at the lack of tactical forethought on the part of the Committee and Colonel Decie. The fact that the ratepayers were hardly overtaxed in Herefordshire had become well-known; the rates for education were practically the lowest in the country. The Board felt unable to act directly which is a

reflection not on its powers to ensure adequate schooling but its political willingness to intervene in the local milieu of its political allies. Instead the Bishop of Hereford seemed to act as the Board's agent on the spot; he privately corresponded with the Secretary of the Board and arranged conciliatory meetings for the teachers and the Committee.

The Bishop and the Clergy were particularly exercised about the lack of moral control on the children during the strike. About sixty schools were closed and a further ten seriously understaffed. In many villages, the parents and pupils supported the teachers and caused havoc with what few new teachers had been found. The children went on strike in Ross and several villages, were bribed to attend in Ledbury and in other schools locked out their new teachers or rioted in the classrooms.<sup>43</sup> Children were reported in the national papers as rioting or yelling 'blacklegs' or 'we want our teachers back' in the dispute. The Committee still pressed on, appointing teachers at higher wages than the strikers, to break the strike.<sup>44</sup> Even so, half the children in Herefordshire were not being educated at all. Colonel Decie tried to get the permission of the Board to agree that the closed schools were unavoidably closed which would not have affected the Grant. The reply was not reassuring, it said only that each case would be judged on its merits, and suggested a round-table conference. By this time even Decie and his fellow councillors could sense that a salary scale would have to be agreed with the NUT.

The face-saving document that was finally produced by the Salaries Committee and agreed by the Education Committee reads throughout as if it was a reasonable and moderate solution. It discusses the scales, the conditions for promotion and the small amount that was outstanding between the teachers and the Council which, in its magnanimity,

it had taken over. It does not read as the conclusion to the hard fought and bitter battle it was. The document was agreed by the Committee on February 21st, 1914 and on March 1st, a mass meeting of teachers agreed to the settlement. For many teachers, it had been a three-month strike in which they had to worry not only about their livelihood and futures but their homes as well. They were united and a powerful council, making some tactical errors, and with new allies won over to the teachers, had lost. The teachers were all reinstated, with the exception of a few whose posts had been filled during the strike. The latter were placed on a sustentation allowance that lasted for several years.

At the mass meeting the teachers made it clear that the salary scale was inadequate, but the fact of its existence at all and the Union recognition involved led them to agree to the terms, 'for the present'.<sup>45</sup>

The Schoolmaster quoted approvingly from a Daily Chronicle editorial at the strike's end, which agreed that an immediate social reform was the need to improve education and the teachers' pay and status along with it.

It added —

"The status of the rural teachers under the County Councils is generally speaking the worst of all. The strike in Herefordshire has done much to advertise and something to diminish this serious evil."<sup>46</sup>

Rural teachers, badly paid and under-organised, had shown that they could win a strike against a confident, local employer. Their unity, which must have included many who were not certificated, was a strong example to the many other teachers involved in the Salary Campaign in 1913 and 1914.

By the end of 1914, the Salaries Committee of the NUT reported that in half the local Education Authorities in England and Wales salaries had been improved.<sup>47</sup> Class teachers, male and female, had been the main beneficiaries. Eighty-eight Local Authorities had now got salary scales.<sup>48</sup> The committee regarded this a a satisfactory situation. Its efforts in 'inspiring, directing and assisting' local effort it felt suited the Union - its organisation and strengths. Progress halted in 1914 with the outbreak of War, the Executive declared that the Campaign was unpatriotic in time of war.

The patriotism of the early months of the War was soon whittled away by the actions of the Local Authorities in employing any able-bodied person they could to replace the drafted men teachers and by the confusion that operated within the wartime schools. It soon became obvious that workers in industry were improving their wages due to their increased bargaining power in time of manpower shortage and their superior union organisation. Many workers received war bonuses to help with the rapidly rising cost of living. By October 1916, the Executive of the NUT had been compelled by rank and file discontent to reopen the campaign --

"In view of the present heavy strain upon the salaries of teachers and of the difficulty experienced in obtaining from local authorities adequate financial relief, this Executive resolves to initiate and develop a national movement to secure an immediate and substantial increase in teachers' salaries."<sup>49</sup>

The Campaign for War Bonuses grew apace but again the Local Authorities could decide on whatever principle suited them the amount that was reasonable as a Bonus. They differed widely in the sum offered. For instance, in York, the Education Committee felt that a Bonus of £20 should not be given equally to men and women (although both were affected by inflation) but

"heads of families [as opposed to] young ladies living at home, .. with the whole of their salary to use as pocket money"<sup>50</sup>

should be given a proportionately larger part of the sum. In Lewes, the Education Committee gave a War Bonus to all teachers except supply teachers, pupil teachers and those earning more than £140; it was also graded according to the size of the wage.<sup>51</sup> Again the impression is of a small firm dealing with its labour force in a condescending and authoritarian manner. At Lewes, for instance, the Teachers' Association Secretary, C. Hodges, was always treated as a suppliant and never as a respected Lewes citizen or an experienced Union representative. The Committee nearly always made decisions affecting teachers without consulting him and rarely allowed to lead a deputation to them present the teachers' case. The most regular communication between the two bodies was by an extended correspondence which was often interrupted by the Education Committee refusing to participate. So, for instance, to a letter asking about War Bonuses, the Committee replied, on the 11th November, 1918, "that it had nothing further to add to their letter of the 9th September last" and on the question of salary scales they replied to the Lewes Association that "The Education Committee be recommended to inform the applicants they see no occasion to reopen the matter by receiving another deputation."<sup>52</sup> Again, a rather better organised teachers' association in York, a place with a policy of employing certificated teachers before the War, found itself desperately staving off a concerted attack on their living standard and work conditions. The War was used as an excuse to economise on teachers. The Committee proposed that headteachers should teach more, that the number of pupil teachers be reduced by fifty per cent and that no more certificated teachers be employed.<sup>53</sup> The teachers tried to get an improved salary scale or a War Bonus but with real difficulty.

Their arguments were that teachers were in a 'sweated industry', that class teaching was now the norm for certificated teachers (no promotion) and that few boys were becoming pupil teachers and women were leaving for more remunerative work.<sup>54</sup>

Another Local Authority in the South passed a resolution, after receiving a request for a War Bonus, that if

"There should be any members of the Staff who are unable to work harmoniously on the terms provided by the new scale, the Committee recommend that such teachers should be invited to tender their resignation to the Education Committee."<sup>55</sup>

In other words, the contradictions that existed prior to the War were now being exacerbated by a Salary Campaign growing in strength in the country and an economy campaign developing from the Local Authorities. Even 'progressive' Education Authorities, such as the London County Council, found itself creating 'dilutees' and 'freezing' salary increments (in 1919). The renewed salary campaign became, with varying degrees of action and success, a controlled ferment of new ideas and collective organisation that began to alter the Union collective consciousness about itself. Furthermore, the State became actively involved in seeking a solution to the antagonistic relations between the teachers and their employers.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER 3

1. Bamford, T.W. (1905) 'Evolution of Rural Education 1850-1964', Univ. of Hull.  
In the East Riding of Yorkshire 42 out of 71 teachers in one area (1857) were born within 10 miles of the school and only 6 came from outside Yorkshire; 36 of them had lived in the village for 10 years or more. Other examples of rural educational conditions exist in Horn, P. (1978).
2. Bamford, T.W. *ibid.*
3. Bamford, T.W. *ibid.*
4. Raistrick, E. (1971) 'Village Schools', Dalesmen Publishing.
5. Dunbabin, J.P.D., 'The Incidence and Organisation of Agricultural Trades Unionism in the 1870's. Agricultural History Review 107, 16, 1968.
6. Groves, R. (1949). 'Sharpen the Sickle' The History of the Farmworkers' Union, Porcupine Press, p. 108.
7. Groves, R. *ibid.* p. 109. He was at an early meeting with George Edwards, its organiser, and was to continue on the Union Executive until 1939 (the year of his death).
8. Grove, R. (1967) Conrad Noel and the Thaxted Movement, Merlin Press.
9. Edwards, B. (1974) The Burston School Strike', Lawrence and Wishart.
10. Twelve new branches according to Tom Higdon in 'The Burston Rebellion', National Labour Press.
11. Higdon, T. *ibid.*
12. Edwards, B. p. 136, Parish Meeting October 30, 1914.

13. 'Casey' of Labour Leader 'The Burston School Strike', National Labour Press.
14. A charge of excessive punishment of two Barnardo girls and discourtesy to the Managers, (including not bowing to the Vicar's daughter and giving her a 'cold reception' and not replying to the Vicar's 'good day'!) Edwards, B. p. 28.
15. Higdon, T. op.cit.
16. Norfolk Education Committee Minutes 1915/1916.
17. Edwards, G. (1922) 'From Crow-Scaring to Westminster',  
'N.U.A.W., p. 201.
18. Edwards, G. ibid. p. 187.
19. Edwards, G. ibid., p. 188.
20. Higdon, T. op.cit.
21. One was addressed by the President of Lowestoft Trades and Labour Council and in his speech made reference to the teachers in a way that explains the solidarity in the later Lowestoft strike - "The present social unrest was due to the fact that the Schoolmaster was about. The people were being educated.." Edwards, B. p. 121.
22. Edwards, B., p.145.
23. John Scurr 'How the School was opened', Herald, May 19th, 1917.
24. The Burston School later had strong links with the Teachers Labour League in the 1920's. G.T.C. Giles, a member of the TLL Executive, sent his children to the school and Tom Higdon was on the League's Executive. The supporters of the Higdon's in the NUT were the Labour supporters, who, in the same year as their fight for Labour Affiliation by the Union (1917) produced a pamphlet (The Burston Case, How it Affects NUT Members) describing the lack of real Union support of the Higdon's (which



24. only several years later, provided sustentation to  
(Contd.) Mrs. Higdon after vindicating her stand). Edwards, B.  
pp. 33-44.
- The pamphlet was written to support those 'striking a blow  
against Managerial persecution and Clerical intolerance and  
to secure a proper professional status for the rural teacher'.  
Its NUT supporters included Michael Conway, J. Corlett and  
G. D. Bell - all of the left.
25. NUT Report, 1914.
26. Thompson, D. op.cit. Other devices included deputations to  
trade unions and cooperative societies, indoor and outdoor  
meetings and house to house calls, p. 228.
27. NUT Report, 1910.
28. NUT Report, 1913.
29. Yorkshire Herald 19 November, 1913.
- Leeds 1907 277 teachers entered schools  
1913 30 teachers entered schools
- Gosden, P. H. J. H. Pupil teacher recruits fell from  
11,018 (1906/7) to 1454 (1913/14). p.209.
30. Thompson, D. (1927) 'Professional Solidarity among the Teachers  
of England', Columbia Univ. Press, p. 227.
31. Thompson, D. p. 227.
32. Schoolmaster, May 3, 1913.
33. Thompson, D. p.232.
34. The Schoolmaster, Nov. 8, 1913. When the teachers had written  
to the Council in 1913 they pointed out that two-thirds of the  
headmasters received less than £130 and headmistresses £100!
35. Schoolmaster, Jan. 3, 1914. The NUT Annual Report 1914 gives  
the figure of 'nearly 240 teachers'.

36. Reported in the Schoolmaster, Jan. 24, 1914.
37. Thompson, D., p. 237.
38. Daily Mail, in Thompson, D. p. 236.
39. In Thompson, D. p.239.
40. The Schoolmaster, Nov. 15, 1913. The Post also referred to the way in which some Local Authorities had little to choose but to 'sweat' teachers, caught between little finance and new demands from the Board. The demand that the State involves itself financially with teachers' salaries to stop the 'sweating' case in the Westminster Gazette, Feb. 3, 1914.
41. Observer, Jan. 25, 1914.
42. PRO ED/241768 'Herefordshire Teachers' Strike: Secretary's Private correspondence with certain individuals.'
43. Horn, P. 'The Herefordshire School Strike of 1914' in History of Education Society occasional publications No. 3, Autumn 1977 and Thompson, D. p. 253/4. Schoolmaster Feb.7, 1914.
44. Horn, P. (1977). At Newent, a headteacher (£95 p.a.) and his daughter probably a supplementary teacher (£20) were replaced by a young couple (£160-£170 p.a.).
45. Thomspon, D., p.260.
46. Schoolmaster, Feb. 28, 1914.
47. NUT Annual Report, 1915.
48. These Authorities included 149 out of 321 LEA's - Banbury, Birmingham, Bridgewater, Brighton, Cornwall, Derbyshire, Dorset, Ealing, East Ham, Lewes, Llanelly, Manchester, Northumberland, Nottingham, Staffordshire, Walsall, Warrington and Worcester.
49. Gosden, p. 36. Partington (p.16) mentions the fact that the urban women teacher earned less than the women munition workers, who were unskilled and drafted in at short notice

49.

(Contd.) from radically different occupations.

50. Yorkshire Herald, March 30, 1917.

51. Lewes Borough Education Committee Minute Book,  
April 1914-February 1918, p.35.

52. Lewes Education Committee Minutes Book Feb. 1918-May 1923.  
A correspondence with the NUT Salaries Committee was kept  
at this unhurried pace.

53. Yorkshire Herald, July 21, 1915. The Committee added that  
"it is very doubtful if there has been a sufficient gain  
in efficiency to justify the extra burden on the ratepayers".

54. Yorkshire Herald, March 30, 1917.

55. NUT Annual Report 1919. Presidential Address.

#### 4. THE RHONDDA STRIKE 1919

The significance of the Rhondda strike in the development of the NUT and the fight for the Union Scale of salaries is twofold. Firstly, it represents a successful, higher-order development in the salaries campaign. It was the first time since the Union Scale was formulated and the salaries campaign opened in 1913, that the Union demands were met. The qualitative step that the Rhondda represents in the development of the Union can be illustrated by a number of issues - the influence of the strike leader, W. G. Cove, in the Union, the inclusion of uncertificated teachers in the Union, the recognised impetus to the salary campaign nationally by the Rhondda victory and the developing alliance between sections of the teachers and the Labour movement. Secondly, the Rhondda strike and the issues involved had a great deal in common with the developments in class struggle, and industrial conditions and disputes waged by the working class generally. Many issues which influenced and intensified the industrial struggles in this period are reflected within the Rhondda teachers conflict, for instance, the 'dilution' of skilled workers, the influx of cheaper non-skilled labour, the collapse of the traditional employer-employee relationships, the intervention of the state and the influence of the new unionism and socialism.

So Rhondda represents not only an internal qualitative step in the development of teacher unionism but represents the problems of class struggle common to the working class generally in this period.

The elementary education system was in a parlous condition before the war - low salaries, discontent of the teachers, the local authority parsimony, different grades of teachers - and these problems worsened as the cost of living rose sharply during the war. The same

problems that affected industry affected education particularly the replacement of skilled workers by untrained workers. This particular strategy was called 'dilution' by the engineering and shipbuilding workers, and by some teachers. The Times Educational Supplement (T.E.S.) suggested a scheme for drafting 'well-educated' women, without training, into teaching.<sup>1</sup> These 'unskilled and untrained' teachers were felt by many teachers to be jeopardising the gradual movement to certification.

At the same time, the salaries campaign was beginning to increase in scale. The Schoolmaster rapidly became filled in its correspondence and notice columns with details of local claims, campaigns and settlements. These same columns repeatedly began to mention local alliances with the Labour movement, especially in the Trades Councils. Teachers in Cardiff, Swansea (since 1889), Ebbw Vale, Nottingham and Burton-on-Trent were amongst this latter group.<sup>2</sup> The Trades Councils were often concerned with education in their work - not only salaries but staffing levels, the working class child's education, increasing militarism in schools and victimised teachers. The Salaries Campaign seems to either have increased the number of affiliations to the Trades Council or opened correspondence about a standing relationship.

However, an increase in class consciousness in parts of the country had to contend with teachers divided into different localities, different trained backgrounds, multifarious wages and local regulations and represented in several organisations. The NUT represented only the certificated teachers, and the uncertificated teacher and the supplementary teachers had their own organisations. It was sometimes the local organisations of uncertificated teachers, the class teachers associations, which affiliated to the Trades Councils.

The same conditions prevailed in the Rhondda valley as existed elsewhere - poor conditions of work, the education system in crisis and a divided teaching force. Yet the Rhondda was the home of the new turbulent Miners Federation of Great Britain, and particularly, of the new socialist industrial unionism. The close proximity of the teachers by birth, habitation and living conditions to these militants was a factor in the success of the Rhondda strike.

The de-humanising work conditions of the miners and the rapid spread of socialist ideas to a well educated working class caused The Times to describe it as "the industrial storm centre of Great Britain".<sup>3</sup> The influence of the Central Labour College and the Plebs League, with their courses in Marxist economics and industrial history, was very strong in the South Wales valleys. Will Mainwaring,<sup>4</sup> A.J. Cook,<sup>5</sup> Noah Ablett and Noah Rees were among the leading figures of this new militant group of miners. This group, known as the Unofficial Reform Committee of the South Wales Miners Federation<sup>6</sup> were closely connected with the Plebs League as students and tutors, with the Miner's Lodges and the Trades Councils. The leader of the teachers in the strike was W.G. Cove who had himself worked for five years as a miner before training as a teacher. The relationship between this group and the teachers can only be deduced from fragments of evidence - the eloquent speeches in support of the strike by A.J. Cook in the Council Meetings, the public speeches at teachers' strike meetings of Will Mainwaring and A.J. Cook and the materialist outlook, expressed in the writings of W.G. Cove, common to the Plebs League and Unofficial Reform Committee work.

The Plebs League and the Central Labour College had been created from a strike at Ruskin College, Oxford on the issue of an Independent Working Class Education. Self-financing classes, a significant number in South Wales, were taught by unpaid tutors in miners' halls, cafes or private houses.<sup>7</sup> The subject was usually

Marxist economic theory and the classes were also a major part of the 'advanced' miners' movement, often run under supervision of the local Miners' Lodge: the significance of these classes was recognised elsewhere viz —

"The sense of antagonism between Capital and Labour has been considerably deepened during recent years by the propaganda of a small but earnest group of men whose teachings are rapidly permeating the entire trade union movement. Advance causes feed on discontent and the indisposition of employers to concede the claims of the workers to a higher standard of life had provided fuel for the propaganda of the Independent Labour Party and recently of the enthusiasts of the Central Labour College movement. The influence of the 'advanced' men is growing very rapidly and there's ground for belief that under their leadership attempts of a drastic character will be made by the working classes as a whole to secure direct control by themselves of their particular industries".<sup>8</sup>

Cove is recorded as teaching an Industrial History Class in Abergorky in 1917, and an Industrial History and Economic Class 1917<sup>9</sup> and Gwen Ray, another teachers' leader, taught an English class in the Mid-Rhondda in early 1917.<sup>10</sup> (One of 7 miners' classes running that year in the Rhondda by the Central Labour College and the No. 1 Miners' Lodge.) Cove had written to Plebs in 1916, discussing a previous issue on Education, and expressing his own views on elementary education —

"[it was possible to observe] that the prevailing form of society and the most powerful economic classes in the various epochs have been responsible both for the type of teacher employed and for the particular brand of education given in the schools. The problem I have to face in my work as a schoolteacher is how to make the children class conscious under present conditions.... let him get a conception of the struggle for existence by lessons on the development of his class..."<sup>11</sup>

This interest in a working class education was shared in the Plebs League by miners and teachers, as it was of general concern in the valleys.<sup>12</sup> Mark Starr, an N.C.L.C. organiser, reported to Plebs in March 1917, on a talk he gave in Aberdare on the Central Labour College and education, in which the issue of the "relation of the movement to the

professional elementary schoolteachers", was raised, a subject of strong local interest.

Cove wrote a Plebs pamphlet, with D.W. Thomas (the Secretary of the Upper Rhondda Plebs branch) on 'Helps to the Study of Capital'; The preface stated: "we lay no claim to be expert Marxists but we are strongly of the opinion that in order to understand Marx, Capital itself must be read". In the same issue of Plebs, he wrote a long, complex article on 'Supply and Demand' - value, price etc.<sup>13</sup>

Plebs congratulated him on election to the NUT Executive in 1919. Cove was exceptional but not unique - Gwen Ray and other teachers worked closely with the miners in the Plebs League.

[The year after (1921) a Rhondda teacher wrote to Plebs asking to be put in touch with other 'Plebs schoolteachers'.

"Among Plebs readers are doubtless a good many schoolteachers -

"the great majority of teachers, as we know, are hopelessly ignorant of their economic relationship to capitalist society and I suggest the drawing up of a manifesto showing clearly the anomalous position of 'non-industrial' wage workers. Are we clear in our own minds on the subject? Plebs can help us here".<sup>14</sup>]

The very way the strike was described and fought suggests a close link between this new industrial unionism, socialist militancy and the teachers.

The Rhondda strike was preceded by a number of significant events in the locality. Firstly, the affiliation of the Rhondda Class Teachers Association with the Local Trades and Labour Councils,<sup>15</sup> the attempted dismissal of W.G. Cove from his teaching post and the dispute between Miss Mainwaring and her headteacher.

The affiliation of the Teachers' Association to the Trades Council in March 1913 was taken partly as a positive response to the principle of 'equal pay for equal work' which the Trades Council was in favour of. The uncertificated teachers were mainly women and therefore



were paid less than the certificated teachers and less than the male uncertificated teachers on average. The socialist politics of the Trades Councils caused some disquiet amongst the teachers but a column in the Rhondda Socialist, written by a class teacher, mentioned a significant increase in membership of the Association after Trades Council affiliation. The Rhondda Socialist also recognised the step the teachers had taken —

"a new era is about to dawn for the class teachers of the Rhondda, they have finally recognised the fact that they are workers - some of them slaves on the brink of poverty, others actually in poverty on the brink of destitution and subject to petty tyranny from those in authority over them".<sup>16</sup>

W.G. Cove, who had become involved in the salary revision and Association work, was recommended for dismissal by his School Management Committee "for having attended to work other than school work during school hours".<sup>17</sup> The general feeling seems to be that this was clear victimisation. The Rhondda Leader mentioned his unique number of testimonials from parents and children. Appeals, testimonials and letters from various Labour organisations and teachers were ignored by the School Committee but the Rural District Council accepted a deputation, consisting of the representatives of the NUT, the Rhondda Class Teachers Association, the Miners and the Railwaymen. One of the miners

"asked to be acquainted with the decision of the Council so that they might convey the result to their lodges. He answered then that the matter would not be allowed to rest."<sup>18</sup>

By a small margin, the Council allowed Cove to remain at his teaching post.

Miss Mainwaring, a Rhondda teacher<sup>19</sup> became involved in a dispute with her headteacher, arising from a particular incident when he came into her classroom and asked her to change her teaching. Her refusal was supported by the other schoolteachers who threatened to close

the school. 'Drastic action' was also threatened by the Rhondda Class Teachers Association, perturbed by the 'dangerous precedent' of this executive action of the headteacher. Miss Mainwaring was eventually transferred.

The mood of the teachers at the time was later described by W.G. Cove, in a reflective article twelve years after, as 'sullen and resentful'.<sup>20</sup> The annual meeting of the Rhondda Class Teachers Association, on February 3, 1917, was packed. It voted to elect representatives on to the Trades and Labour Councils, was addressed by a Mid-Rhondda Labour delegate, discussed its attitude to the NUT and resolved to initiate a Salaries Campaign. With public support, it succeeded in persuading the Authority to revise its Salary Scales by the following September.

However, general dissatisfaction with the new scales and with the late arrival of the salary cheques changed the Rhondda Class Teachers Association meeting in November from its proposed business of discussing the new Education Bill to a discussion of the Salary Campaign. This time, W.G. Cove, in an impassioned speech, declared a new Salaries Campaign, based on unity between the various teachers' sections and with the support of the organised Labour movement in the Rhondda. A later mass meeting of certificated and uncertificated teachers was almost unanimous in declaring its intention to strike if the pay demands were not met. At the same time, a deputation of the Action Committee tried to show the Council that the provisions of the new Education Bill for Exchequer grants for teachers' salaries would not therefore affect the local rates. The new salaries would not be a financial burden but would be subsidised by the State. According to the Schoolmaster, the Council neither attempted to prove or disprove this argument but stuck to their provisional salary scales.

The Rhondda Class Teachers Association teachers struck on February 28, 1919.<sup>21</sup> Not being eligible for strike pay, their determination seems to have forced the NUT to support them, especially as they were fighting for the NUT salary scale. An NUT executive member was appointed to the Action Committee (Celfyn Williams) and a strike office was opened in Tonypandy. A number of public meetings were held in the valley, at Ferndale, Tonypandy or Porth; addressed by Celfyn Williams and W.G. Cove, but also by A.J. Cook and Will Mainwaring. Miners Lodges and Union branches were addressed by the teachers. The natural allies of the teachers were the young miners ("especially those who had been to Labour College"<sup>22</sup>) but not all the Labour representatives and support were with the teachers. The differences between the new socialist Labour ideas and the old Liberal/Labour ideas was remarked upon by the teachers. Celfyn Williams said

"it was almost inconceivable to the teachers that direct Labour representatives should decline Trade Union rates of wages to the teachers in their employ".<sup>23</sup>

The 'Labour Teacher' in the Rhondda Leader, constantly attacked the 'old' Labour councillors, seeing them as "(looking after) the interest of the Ratepayers' Association and the Chambers of Trade".<sup>24</sup> or as

"lacking in vision and (having) compromised their principles. I cannot see the difference between the colliery proprietor and the coalminer, the brewer and the check-weigher".<sup>25</sup>

The teachers, as W.G. Cove remarked later, had to make 'fearless propaganda among the miners and the public in the Rhondda'.<sup>26</sup> A distrust on the part of the older Labour supporters of the new class of teachers, demanding their rights as fellow workers, and allied to the socialist militants, is evident.<sup>27</sup> [A.J. Cook was elected as a Rhondda councillor during this period, he was a strong supporter of the teachers.] Speakers at the public meetings, which were very well attended, stressed the 'sweated labour' aspects of teaching and how the teachers were

changing. Goodwin, a local teacher, said

"Some teachers had been regarded in the past as smug and self-satisfied individuals .... the teachers now realised that they were subject to the same economic laws as every member of the community. They had been brought face to face with the fact that they had been wage slaves".<sup>28</sup>

Again and again, the speakers stressed that the strike was for

'trade union rates', a new step for the teachers. Will Mainwaring said

"The teachers were now beginning to acquire the education which the miners had gained by experience".<sup>29</sup>

The Board of Education intervened in the strike as an arbitrator with agreement on both sides. A Whitehall conference on the 28th and 29th March dealt particularly with the question of the rate support grant. A joint committee with power to settle the dispute was formed, and in the meantime the teachers would return to work. If there was no agreement by April 30th, then the strike would resume.

The question of a return to work concerned a mass meeting at Porth on the 31st March, which lasted four hours. The Rhondda Leader describes a "considerable reluctance...shown by the teachers to resume work in the absence of more definite assurances and pledges being specified".<sup>30</sup> A 'Report from South Wales' in the militant 'Workers Dreadnought' reflects this concern of the militants: "It is a disgrace to think that the teachers have been on strike for a month - for what? For the right of having their grievances negotiated upon?"<sup>34</sup>

Two further meetings of the joint salary committee, on the 9th and 14th April, eventually resulted in the agreement of a new salary scale. In many cases, this doubled the teachers' previous salaries - for instance:

Male certificated teachers -	pre-strike	£80-£150	
	post-strike	£150-£350	
Women certificated teachers -	pre-strike	£80-£110	32.
	post-strike	£140-£300	

The success of the strike action was disputed by the Chairman of the Education Committee, who believed that the 'same wage award' would have been given to the teachers if they had stayed at work.

The strike had been won, according to W.G. Cove, because of the "complete unity of all grades, a readiness to give up our individual opinions and rally as one".<sup>33</sup>

Yet further demands were made by the uncertificated and supplementary teachers, about anomalies, and for the latter, a salary scale. The question of trade union rates was still being fought, not by the NUT who had sent a letter (from its Secretary, Yoxall) expressing satisfaction with the salary scale. The issue of 'cheap labour' was repeated by the Rhondda Class Teachers Association Secretary, Gwen Ray Evans, in a letter to the Committee, on behalf of the uncertificated and supplementary teachers, in September

"[These] teachers are not satisfied and did not pretend to be ..... It was generally understood an early application for the revision of the scales would be made ... especially the serious anomalies."<sup>34</sup>

A.J. Cook, in a later Council meeting, took up this issue —

"They ought to get a certificate of qualification and then they would be able to get the same salary as the certificated teacher. There are many who have been in our employ for many years, some for 21 years, I understand. It is practically impossible for these men to go to College - after serving 29 years. They are efficient and you are going to penalise them because they cannot go to College.... you want them and you employ them and as long as they are necessary it is the duty of this council to pay them properly."<sup>35</sup>

The success of the Rhondda strike, and its example to other local associations throughout the country is recognised as a vital step for the Salary Scale and for the development of the Union.<sup>36</sup> The Union

Salary Scale had been obtained for the first time ever.

In South Wales, other areas were in dispute (Pontypridd, Pembroke, Merthyr and Aberdare). Indeed, at Merthyr, the teachers refused to accept the possible arbitration award agreed in the Rhondda (before it was known), presumably wanting more.

W.G. Cove always maintained that the Rhondda strike was a milestone for the Union. The Rhondda struggle was

"The spearhead of an offensive that lead to higher salaries and the Burnham Committee ..... it was fought on the slogan 'The Union Scales and nothing but the Union Scales'.... (when) it was said that the Union Scales were ideal scales to be aimed at, but not necessarily achieved".<sup>37</sup>

More, it represented a new approach to unionism, influenced by the new materialist philosophy of the Rhondda miners. The strike was won because of the 'fighting spirit' and 'complete unity' of the teachers<sup>38</sup>. The descriptive strike speeches of the time, far removed from the modest petitions of some associations (Lewes, for instance) or the outraged common sense appeals of local branches (West Ham, for instance) are a declaration of class interests and class struggle. The very language of the speeches was one of unionism — 'skilled workmen',<sup>39</sup> (teachers), 'downing tools',<sup>40</sup> 'fellow-workers',<sup>41</sup> (miners) and of 'sound trade union principles'.<sup>42</sup>

In a series of articles in the Rhondda Leader at the time, analysing the strike and isolating difficulties, W.G. Cove expresses this new view of the teachers in more detail.<sup>43</sup>

"I have always thought it was a bad trades unionism to cavil at any good conditions of another body of workers, and that the true attitude for a trade unionist was to fight for the same conditions in his own industry .... Hours are an essential factor in the standard of life as wages, to increase the hours is to lower the standard of life."<sup>44</sup>

He then describes teachers as 'sweated labour', a just term, he believes, when labour produces profit not returned in wages by the

employer, the local authority.

After a fortnight, Cove returned to this question of the teacher's labour, in response to the criticism that the Rhondda pay rates are already high.

"Any questioner who asks this question adopts as his standard of values the market price of labour called teaching, that is, he at once turns the teachers into commodities, and begins to ask the very same question as when he asks the price of bacon. Now, I know that all kinds of labour under the present system of production and exchange are turned into commodities, but it is precisely this fact that provides one of the chief indictments of the workers against the present system. How then, I ask, can any one person who allows himself to be a trades unionist and a 'Labour man' consistently with his principles allow a market price of teachers' labour to determine his attitude towards them?

One of the factors determining the market price of labour is the power of the Trades Unions. Trades Unions tend to force up the market price. Relatively speaking, the teachers' unions have been weak. We are now in the Rhondda experiencing a revival of unionism amongst the teachers, which is expressing itself in an effort to raise the market price, and any trade unionist who opposes us is endeavouring to thwart the inevitable expression of a reunified unionism. The market price of a commodity - of the commodity called labour - is the standard of the capitalist employer, and no sound trade unionist can use the standard of a capitalist employer."<sup>45</sup>

This shows the tremendous influence of Marxist economics on W.G. Cove, the main leader and organiser of the strike.<sup>46</sup>

The strike in the Rhondda altered the Union in several ways. W.G. Cove began to exert a significant influence on the Union Executive, after his election in 1920, and on the Annual Conferences. Although he rarely expressed the detailed Marxist analysis of teaching as a commodity as he had in the Rhondda Leader, it remained implicit in the policies and outlook he supported. His influence was not due just to his oratorical skills or forceful ideas but rested upon the concrete gains for teachers made in the Rhondda. New industrial policies or discussions held within the Union in 1919 and 1920 reflected the lessons

learned in the Rhondda. In debates about strike action, relations with the Labour movement or recruitment of uncertificated teachers, Cove and other Rhondda teachers took a leading role and acted as the new focus for the Left in the Union. The crucible of the Rhondda, which made great changes in the Miners' Union and was the main base of the Plebs League influenced the way the teachers in that area saw themselves and their work. Those ideas spread outward into the NUT at the time when a number of crucial decisions about the Union were being discussed.

A Socialist analysis of teaching and the Union's programme for education were already in operation among teachers, with ideas drawn from the Fabians or Guild Socialists.<sup>47</sup> The influence of the Rhondda socialists, and particularly Cove, with their brand of syndicalism, created a sharper debate about the nature of professionalism and power which became the focus of the succeeding Union conferences.



FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER 4

1. TES, Jan. 25, 1917 and Jan. 18, 1919.
2. TES, Jan. 18, 1917. Also Liverpool, Bradford, Leeds and Aberdare.
3. Times, Nov. 1916, quoted in Simon (65)p. 334.
4. Later the M.P. for the Rhondda Valley.
5. The Miner's leader, locally and internationally.
6. Publishers of the Miners Next Step, 1912. Their manifesto.
7. Millar, J.P.M. (1979) 'The Labour College Movement', NCLC London, p.17.
8. Millar, p.19. 'Commission of Enquiry into Industrial Unrest', No. 7 Division, Report of the Commission for Wales including Monmouthshire HMSO 1917, p. 112.
9. Plebs, Vol. IX, No. 11, Dec. 1917.
10. Plebs, Vol. VIII, No. 12, Jan. 1917.
11. Plebs, Vol. VIII, No. 10, Nov. 1916.
12. Commission in Millar, p.17. "Evidence has been brought before us to show that the workers view with alarm the shortage of teachers and the consequent failure of the local authorities to provide proper education for the children".
13. Plebs, Vol. X, No. 5, June 1918.
14. Plebs, Vol. XIII, No. 3, March, 1921.  
  
This is exactly the kind of outlook expressed within the new Teachers Labour League, formed with the help of Cove and Ray and other Plebs teachers (G.R. Coxon in Ashington).  
  
A tape recording of Mark Starr discussing these Pleb teachers is in my possession.

15. Rhondda Socialist, March 15, 1913. There were a number of T & LC's in the area.
16. Rhondda Socialist, March 15, 1913. The Trades Councils were described by the Commission of Enquiry into Industrial Unrest as "centres of educational work from which lectures and classes on political and social subjects have been organised, and secondly... centres of social and political activity" Simon, p.335.
17. Rhondda Leader, Oct. 10, 1917.
18. Rhondda Leader, Oct. 10, 1917.
19. Related, perhaps to Will Mainwaring.
20. Schoolmaster, May 14, 1931.
21. 1200 teachers in number.
22. Rhondda Leader, March 22, 1919.
23. Rhondda Leader, March 18, 1919.
24. Rhondda Leader, March 8, 1919.
25. Rhondda Leader, March 22, 1919.
26. Schoolmaster, 1953.
27. The Aberdare dispute of 1908 when teachers had fought, on the issue of tenure, with the Labour council, reveals similar problems. An opportunist relationship (on and off) of the teachers to the local Trades Council - consequently their actions and notices were distrusted.
28. Rhondda Leader, March 22, 1919.
29. Rhondda Leader, March 29, 1919.
30. Rhondda Leader, April 5, 1919.
31. Workers Dreadnought, April 2, 1919.

32. Schoolmaster, April 19, 1919 and 1953.
33. Schoolmaster, May 14, 1931.
34. Rhondda Leader, Sept. 27, 1919.
35. Rhondda Leader, Oct. 11, 1919. This issue was stilled by the Burnham Report on national provisional scales, produced in December.
36. Tropp, p.311.
37. Schoolmaster, 1953.
38. Schoolmaster, May 14, 1931. Cove.
39. Rhondda Leader, Nov. 10, 1917.
40. Rhondda Leader, March 8, 1919.
41. Workers Dreadnought, March 22, 1899.
- 42.. Rhondda Leader, March 8, 1919. "Indeed as 'skilled' workman they should claim the right of cooperating with headteachers in the forming of timetables and syllabuses", Rhondda Leader, Nov 10, 1917.
43. Cove later became the youngest NUT President in 1922 and a Labour M.P. from 1923-1959.
44. Rhondda Leader March 15, 1919 - in response to arguments about the short working week of teachers.
45. Rhondda Leader, March 29, 1919.
46. Whether 'Labour Teacher' is the same person, I do not know - but the same influence is present viz 'The right to fix our own value on our own labour' March 8, Rhondda Leader.
47. These ideas will be discussed in Chapter 7 - 'Teachers and Socialist Ideas'.

## 5. NORTH RIDING OF YORKSHIRE DISPUTE

The particular circumstances which prevailed in the Rhondda and the alliances with Labour which were being created locally in towns and cities did not prevail everywhere. Indeed, the organisation of the rural teachers continued to be difficult. The prevailing image of the period (1910-1920), like that in Herefordshire and Lewes that we have seen, was of a group of teachers earnestly petitioning their political and financial masters on the virtues of their case - these petitioned virtues fell on stony ground. The attitude threaded throughout the County Councils, and often more clearly at work than in the cities, was of a vigorous defence of low rates, rates extracted from house and land owners (themselves), for the provision of services to the working class.

The spur to all teachers' actions was the rapid inflation which was steadily reducing their standard of living<sup>1</sup> in wartime and the lack of interest in their condition, in contrast to the war bonuses granted to industrial workers.

In the North Riding, a war bonus extracted from the County Council (£80,000) had been rescinded by the Council in early 1919. Instead of it becoming a permanent feature of teachers' wages, the pre-war level was returned to. On February 1st, an Annual General Meeting of the National Union of Teachers North Riding Association had overwhelmingly agreed to hand in their resignations if asked to by the Unions (ninety per cent of the meeting). The General Secretary of the Association, Matthew Ronson, had sent each of the headteachers a letter which asked them to get their teachers to send in resignation forms prior to the meeting. With the consent of Hamilton House, he also added that

"The Union pledges itself to sustain at full pay all members for 5 years and non-members for one year and besides no teacher shall resume duty until all are re-instated in their present position."<sup>2</sup>

Following the Rhondda, the NUT nationally in practice was moving away from its certificated teacher base to include the uncertificated teachers.

[The same week as this letter was sent out in the North Riding, the NUT Executive received its Report of the Special Committee on Uncertificated and Supplementary Teachers - opposed by the Conservative or anti-Labour NUT leaders. Bell of the Teachers Labour League supported it - mentioning the danger of a permanent blackleg force amongst other things. At the Annual Conference at Cheltenham that Easter it became the Union policy to admit these teachers.]

The School Management sub-committee of the North Riding County Council met a deputation of the NUT on March 22nd and, according to Ronson in a letter to all teachers, it had "unanimously decided to increase teachers' salaries permanently by £80,290". The NUT then decided to withhold its resignations until this decision<sup>3</sup> was ratified by the Council. On the 14th May, the Council met and decided that £27,400 of the £80,290 should be regarded as a temporary augmentation only - that it could be withdrawn. In his letter, Ronson then clarified the date when resignations were to be handed in. These dates varied according to contract - generally the headteachers had to give three months notice, class teachers one month's notice. On the deadline, 31st May, six hundred and fourteen certificated teachers and three hundred and twenty nine uncertificated teachers handed in their resignations; since January, a further twenty-two certificated teachers decided to join with their colleagues and resign.<sup>4</sup>

By July 5th, one hundred and fifty out of four hundred schools were closed. These schools were mainly in the north of the

county, in Cleveland and Thornaby, adjoining another Authority, Stockton, which had been on strike for a month earlier in the year. Richmond in the North West of the country was probably not affected very much as the local teachers had proved a disappointment to the North Riding NUT in not offering their resignations. Many schools were still open, staffed by headteachers and supplementaries; the headteachers' resignations were not due to begin until August 31st and the supplementary teachers were not organised in a union at all. By July 19, 1919, nine hundred and twenty five teachers had resigned and two hundred and ninety nine elementary schools or departments were closed.<sup>5</sup>

The Council's right to manage its own educational service as it wished to was in jeopardy through this united action of the teachers - a united action depending on the close cooperation between headteachers, certificated and uncertificated teachers. The sticking point for many on the Council was the withdrawal of the resignation notices - unless they were withdrawn, they would not negotiate or compromise. Diplomatic amendments by the members of the School Management sub-committee and a Labour councillor, that the temporary bonus should be paid until the impending arrival of the National Board of Education scale of salaries, was rejected. A meeting of the Council on August 2, 1919 to reconsider their position was in disarray as proposals to rescind the decision to make part of the settlement temporary was withdrawn because the teachers were still on strike. On August 23rd, another Council meeting to rescind the 'temporary' decision was addressed by a 'hard-liner' in the dispute, Sir James Legard, as follows —

"....The teachers, acting on extremely bad advice, had taken the worst possible course. They were not members of a Trade but were public servants, trained by the State. That they should organise in strike was not only a bad example to the children of whom they had charge, but a great discredit to this profession."<sup>6</sup>

What was at stake in the North Riding was the right of management to decide what teachers should be paid, as they saw fit. The issue of 'temporary' or 'permanent' augmentation, though complex, involved for the teachers the right to have a permanent pay scale, a new scale. Their determination, as evidenced by their numbers in a rural area on strike and in their letters and strike Bulletins, was strong. It was not their lack of concern for education but their concern for it, a point Legard, ignored which made them try to defend it against a promise-breaking employer. From their point of view, they wished to continue to act with

'whole-hearted loyalty which it is our duty to give to the nation's children and which it is the nation's duty to expect and gain from its teachers'.<sup>7</sup>

The "years of self-sacrificing patriotism"<sup>8</sup> were over.

Because of this attitude, a concern for service in a context of trust, the teachers constantly sought to involve the public on their side. In July, the Strike Bulletin talked of the enthusiasm and support of the public at a series of meetings in Cleveland —

"At Redcar a meeting of over 1,000 citizens listened for more than an hour to various local speakers and at the close unanimously called upon Sir Beresford Peirce to take immediate steps to bring about a settlement. At South Bank, the big Cooperative Hall was filled, and over 400 people passed a similar unanimous resolution. At Loftus, Brotton, Carlin How and Eston, large meetings have been attended with equal success and Guisborough Urban District Council has sent up a resolution asking the County Council to affect a speedy settlement with the teachers."<sup>9</sup>

The County Council seemed to have prevaricated throughout July.

It appears from one report that they had circularised all School

Managers asking them to bring on the summer holiday duties earlier in the month. Several refused, according to the local NUT Secretary<sup>10</sup>. Each teacher was circularised by the Council asking them to withdraw their notices without negotiation, in other words to break the strike unity. This phrase, used by the NUT in Strike Bulletin No. 2, was followed by another referring to the power of the Council; as 'bowing to the Supreme Authority'.

A dispute of this nature, with a clear breakdown of the education service and no means available by which the two sides can negotiate, needed to go to arbitration. At this period, if either party to the dispute refused to go to arbitration then there would be deadlock and the Board of Education could not compel the parties to arbitrate. Arbitration would also be extremely difficult in this situation as there were as many comparable cases as local authorities - there being no standard scale nationally.

A move from the School Management Sub-Committee to go to arbitration by the Board of Education and to ask teachers to withdraw their notices pending the results of arbitration was agreed by the Education Committee in principle but a teachers' deputation from the new strike office in Northallerton, supported by the District organiser for the NUT tried to persuade them to change the terms of reference. They asked that arbitration should decide —

"whether the remuneration of the teachers employed in public elementary schools by the local authority should be increased, and if so, to what extent, and in what measure, and from what date the increase should take effect?"<sup>11</sup>

This was accepted by the Education Committee as the basis for arbitration, involving as it did the question of temporary or permanent



augmentation of salaries. Because of a rail strike, the County Council did not meet until October 20th and it then accepted the teachers' terms for arbitration, not without resistance from its 'hard-liners' — Hutton, a councillor, regarded it as handing over its functions to the NUT and Legard referred to the 'dictatorship of the Union'.<sup>12</sup> This meeting was crucial to the teachers, most of whom had been on strike for nearly four months, and an open letter from the strike's Standing Committee had asked them in the previous week to ignore rumours, not to take industrial action (presumably in returning to work) and

"stand absolutely firm at this, the most critical juncture of the campaign."<sup>13</sup>

What apparently decided the Council was an intervention made by a Councillor and local M.P., Turton, quoting from a statement of the President of the Board of Education. This was summarised by the North Riding News and it suggested that although there was no wish by the Board to interfere in the Local Education Authority, the terms of reference for the arbitration seemed the best possible and unless they were agreed the central grant to the Local Education Authority, in respect of elementary education, would be withdrawn. In effect, this would cost the ratepayers more than the probable arbitration award. Since the grant was not being used because of the strike, the Board regarded the educational work as not being done. Further, he added —

"I confess the circumstances which give rise to the dispute and the withdrawal of teachers' services seem to me to have been of an unusually trivial character."<sup>14</sup>

As in Herefordshire, in 1914, but increasingly in wartime, the Board of Education, representing a new State policy, was to intervene to check the actions of recalcitrant local authorities. This was to be the case throughout 1919 and in the early 1920's.

The teachers returned to work two days after the County Council meeting, after four months on strike. The arbitration award, given on November 22nd or thereabouts, gave them a new scale, or at least a regional scale amended, and increased their remuneration by £20. The open letter, sent by the North Riding County Association to its members, congratulated them on the firm stand they had taken throughout, ignoring attempts to break their unity and that "we can assure you that your solidarity alone won the fight".<sup>15</sup> Teachers loyal to the County Council were thanked by a local landowner and Chairman of the Education Committee, Sir William Worsley. Later that year Legard said in the Committee that the arbitration award vindicated the Council as it was the same money offered by the Council as at the beginning of the dispute. What he did not say was the attempt to 'humiliate the teachers' (Tyson, the Labour Councillor) was stopped by public opinion, and that the strong solidarity of the teachers, in a rural area, had beaten the local squirearchy.

The North Riding strike showed that the wave of discontent among elementary teachers was not confined to the urban or industrial areas. It also revealed to the Union and to other rural teachers that they could organise and unite to fight their employers and overcome problems of communication, geography and tradition in the country areas. The extent of their victory could not be judged solely by the monetary gain but by the expression of disbelief and anger at the 'world turned upside down' by the landowners and County Councillors. The North Riding teachers, in a repeat performance of the Herefordshire dispute, and in a more dramatic way than in many similar conflicts erupting in the county areas had shattered the implicit relationship between themselves and their employees - the social class which included the church, the farmers and the landowners.

The old Union policy which usually prevailed as the main employment option, moving to a different Local Authority with better pay, was significantly rejected in the North Riding. The fact that the North Riding was surrounded by Local Authorities with better pay scales or war bonuses, and even dotted with towns with better pay, did not lead to migration of the teaching force but to a determination to fight. This dispute, occurring as it did in 1919, was the symbolic end to the old 'blacklisting' by persuasion policy of the Union. Even the country teachers were now uniting in dispute with their local employers.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER 5

1. NUT, Sept. 25, 1916, letter to North Riding Education Committee.
2. Letter, North Riding File, NUT Archive. 4th January, 1919.
3. Letter, North Riding File, NUT Archive. 15th May, 1919.
4. Letter, North Riding File, NUT Archive. 3rd June, 1919.
5. North Riding News, July 19, 1919. 'The Teachers Strike'.
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PART TWO

## 6. THE WARTIME CRISIS AND AN EDUCATION 'CONTRACT'

The period from 1917 to 1919 was a period when social conflict and contradictions were heightened in Britain. It seems as if every part of the social fabric was straining from within or under scrutiny from without, either as part of the Reconstruction plans or as part of Labour's policies. Whether or not this period of increased state intervention in economic and social spheres, of strikes and rapidly growing union membership and of a significant change of balance and initiative from men to women in social policy and action is to be regarded as near revolutionary, it was a period of rising economic, political and social expectations for the working class and this was bound up with the role of the Labour Party.

Each of the major issues of the period affected teachers in their discussions or actions, apart from the concentration by workers, management and Government on the question of the new Education Act. Extending the franchise to women and the fight for equal pay were either led by women teachers amongst women workers or certainly involved their full support within and without the National Union of Teachers. The latter issue led to the creation of two new Unions, the National Federation of Women Teachers and the smaller National Association of Men Teachers (later to become the National Association of Schoolmasters). Joint Industrial Negotiation Committees (the Whitley Committees) rejected by the strongest industrial unions were a boon to the public service sector, involving union recognition and national pay scales, though the discussion of Whitleyism by the Labour movement always included, at this time, the question of joint management of industry. In both these ways, as a Trade Board, as a Whitley Committee or even as part of a

syndicalist or guild socialist strategy, these committees were discussed by teachers. The language used by teachers though included within the conceptual boundaries, talk of a self-governing profession - a term used by guild socialist and Labour Party teachers and by Conservatives and Teachers' Registration Council supporters. The role of the education service and its teachers in the new post-war reconstruction was fought over by industrialists, the Government and the Labour Party, all with supporters or in the process of raising them within the teaching body. Promises and a new Utopianism in Education abounded from all sides.

The teachers themselves were in full debate about their future. Were they workers or part of the management class or independent, in between? This question was discussed in itself but also as part of the issue of Trades Council membership, Labour Party affiliation, strikes, civil servant status or professionalism. While the discussion of these issues as reported in the educational, local or national press or in union minute books may have been bound entirely within a question of contemporary tactics or idealistic rationality, they were seen by other teachers and other listeners and observers as evidence of teacher direction - as workers or as neutrals in the class struggle. It was not a question of the numbers involved so much as their actions or their arguments. For example, many teachers were probably unaffected directly by the question of Labour Party affiliation or South Wales syndicalism or guild socialism, but the actions and issues raised by these debates among teachers was a source of concern to the Government; the new Minister of Education, Fisher, several times between 1917 and 1919 referred to the social danger of restless teachers, so did The Times and Lloyd George.

The issue of Labour Party affiliation was running at the same time as the question of Whitley councils in education, equal pay, the admission of uncertificated teachers, militarism in schools and guild socialism and a self-governing profession. Although they may be separated analytically, at the time they were all the same issue - the issue of the social and political identity of teachers.

The main contradiction between teachers and their employers was represented in discussions or letters about the Labour Party, about Civil Service status and about the Teachers' Registration Council. Whatever the solution preferred, the issue was always the problem of the employers. Who the employers were depended largely on the political perspective of the teachers, that is the local squirearchy and middle class ratepayer representatives or the State. The role of the State, largely in the war and early post-war period one of intervention or promised intervention, came to dominate the larger question of service, conditions of work and participation in management which was discussed theoretically by the socialists and more idealistically by Fisher and The Times Education Supplement. Yet for many teachers, it was still a question of the choice made by their local authority, the individuals in control of it and the mesmerising issue of the rates. It was also a matter of individual managers, especially for the appreciable number of church school teachers.

The employers in the local authorities were quite often seen, not only as the niggardly providers of poor salary scales or salaries, but as the inhibitors of the education service. The notion of the quality of the service resided in the teachers, aided and supported increasingly by the Fisher proposals and the Labour Party promises. The employers were the major drawback of a decent provided public, indeed working class, service in education.



Yet they were divided. In the rural areas, the power of the Church of England Vicar in the village schools, the farmers in the Parish Councils, and the landowners in the County Councils were generally not the teachers' allies. They seem through their recorded statements, (Herefordshire and the North Riding and at work in Burston) to be determined employers of a quiescent, impoverished class of teachers and the main employers of a sub-class, the supplementary teachers. Independent councillors or, rarely, a Labour councillor supported the teachers, but the teacher's lack of organisation or union attitude connived at their own servility.

In the towns and cities, the progressive councillors and the Labour and Trade Councils were often interested allies of the teachers, though not without difficulty. Teacher representatives on the Education Committees, though uncommon, acted as spokesmen for the usually stronger urban teacher associations. These associations in the larger towns and cities give the impression of regular meetings and discussions.

In certain regions or towns other local factors, such as industrial unrest or a radical tradition or strong individuals, seem to have produced stronger local alliances and progress - for instance, in Bradford or Swansea (referred to elsewhere in this study).

The period between 1917 and 1919 was, then, one of great intellectual and social ferment for teachers and other workers; while the main question was one of class identity, expressed in terms of political action and a new social policy, there were contradictions among the teachers in the process of decline and expansion. The conflict between a National Union of Teachers representing an elite of certificated teachers and headteachers and other teachers who were either

uncertificated or supplementary, was coming to a conclusion. The NUT was moving sharply from a craft union basis toward an industrial union structure, accepting the uncertificated teachers in its ranks. At the same time, as the local pay scales seem to have been replaced by a hard-fought national salary scale, the question of equal pay for women teachers, who were often in the majority in the disputes and strikes, began to be increasingly raised within the Union and indeed eventually caused a secession from it by the NFWT. As the political and industrial identity of the elementary teachers appeared to be resolving itself in 1919, with more and more teachers taking an active industrial approach to unionism and supporting Labour, the teachers' unity was threatened by the Union's inability to resolve the question of equal pay satisfactorily.

Finally, the major contradiction, between employer and employee, was debated again within or around the question of professionalism and vocation. The Times Educational Supplement, newly arrived on the scene, in its own leaders or comment or in the full reporting of Fisher's speeches increasingly counterpointed a responsible, professional association to an active, industrial model union. Throughout 1919 each strike and each speech of the NUT militants was opposed by a rhetoric of reconstruction and new responsibility. It was not a question of power and participation for teachers, it argued, but of responsibility and a new professionalism in a reconstructed service.

The year 1919 was in many ways a watershed for teachers. Old problems were being urgently resolved, other were appearing irreconcilable. A forward policy in the union did not always mean equality. The sense of intellectual turmoil and economic action by teachers is overpowering compared to later decades yet it is important to recognise that 1919 was also a watershed for the Labour movement generally. What was happening

to the teachers was happening to a greater or lesser extent to other members of the white collar, skilled and manual working class, all within a conjuncture where capital seemed to be in retreat and the future was theirs.

The pressure on local authorities and the Board of Education to act to restore an efficient education service was strong. The entrants into teaching had declined from twelve thousand a year in 1906 to seven thousand in 1917.<sup>1</sup> Areas like London were increasingly using untrained people in nursery classes or as supply teachers, known by the name 'guinea girls'.<sup>2</sup> According to Fisher, before the war nine thousand teachers left teaching annually and now there were only six thousand new entrants to replace them.<sup>3</sup> Of these new entrants, trained, certificated staff were declining - from 1913/14 to the autumn of 1916, male students in training colleges declined from 4,242 to 700.<sup>4</sup> The Army Council, which had at first regarded teaching as a public service and therefore did not recruit teachers, after the introduction of conscription enlisted widely - Sir James Yoxall, the NUT Secretary was reported as saying that

"no fewer than 22,000 teachers had been enlisted for the Army, that the great majority of these under thirty-two years had already been called up and that all those hitherto exempted were now liable to be taken under the new Man Power Act".<sup>5</sup>

These teachers were being replaced by women teachers or not at all.

Teaching was becoming a predominantly female occupation during wartime, though they were always in the majority.<sup>6</sup> Now likely recruits were attracted by higher wages in the new, booming areas of employment especially as the war bonuses were hard fought for and not as much as industrial workers' bonuses anyway.

Yoxall, again —

"The removal of so large a number of the ordinary teachers has led to dangerous dilution in the shape of untrained and uncertificated persons. One of the early measures was the sacrifice of infants by a regulation which confined the employment of certificated teachers to classes over five years of age. Large numbers of unqualified young women were put in sole charge of the first classes on the convenient but false theory that the little ones mattered least...

[Also there is] the illegal connivance of local school authorities at the withdrawal of children over twelve for agricultural and other employment, chiefly in the rural districts"... Again, neither the central nor Local Authorities are making any real attempt to remedy the scarcity in quantity and the deterioration in quality of the teaching staff even for meeting current requirements".<sup>7</sup>

A deputation from the Workers' War Emergency Committee had protested in February 1915 that "the whole law of school attendance had collapsed and children were being employed full time in agriculture".<sup>8</sup> There is a strong feeling that the education system was under strong pressure in the towns and cities, and in the country it was in severe distress. The War was being used to increase the number of untrained and supplementary teachers in areas where the local teachers' association had successfully discouraged their employment years before. At the same time, teachers under severe pressure, with cutbacks of teachers and resources, were offered rationed help or none at all.<sup>9</sup>

In 1916, the London Education Committee had reduced staff in schools and in December of that year, it applied this reduction in every school. Schools with seven or less than seven teachers had to 'give up' a member of staff - as a war economy. Supply teachers became unavailable and the tension and stress on teachers increased, some breaking down under the strain -

"There have been departments where the number of assistant teachers has been two and in some cases, three less than the actual number of cases".<sup>10</sup>

The Committee reduced the amount of clerical and non-professional work of the teachers, restricted the visits of officials to the schools and gave them greater liberty in combining and rearranging classes. The Times Educational Supplement asked that the teachers, for their own good really should allow 'fairly well-educated women' into the schools and that they should be trained on the job. At the same time, they could not be paid much less than the teachers or they would go into the factories. It even suggested they would stay on after the War.<sup>11</sup>

A further suggestion was made in 1918 that demobilised members of the Armed Forces should be used or, as in 1917, rapidly trained disabled soldiers. C.W. Crook, the ex-President of the NUT in his Times Educational Supplement column, commented that

"Some education authorities are showing signs of less wisdom, and are hoping to find all the extra teachers they want in this way without demanding more than a temporary training in their own schools and no standardised academical knowledge. They are apparently forgetting that the freedom to employ unqualified teachers was a war freedom only."<sup>12</sup>

Throughout 1919, not surprisingly in face of the niggardliness of war bonuses and the continuing deterioration of schools, strikes continued. Not only the larger, outright strikes of the North Riding and the Rhondda, but constantly the Schoolmaster and The Times Educational Supplement reported strike meetings, disputes and settlements up and down the country.

In June 1918, the Union had to appoint an additional official to coordinate work of the legal, tenure and salaries committees, due to the rising number of arguments over conditions of work, and two new District organisers were appointed whose immediate duties were filled with salary campaign disputes. The Salaries Committee reported in 1919 and

noted the number of areas where teachers had to hand in their resignations (strike); outstanding were Accrington, Bacup, Carmarthenshire, Dewsbury, Ebbw Vale, Gateshead, Grimsby, Rhondda, Rowley Regis, Ryde and Stockton-on-Tees. It added however that strikes were a last resort and that 'frank and free conferences between representatives of both sides were becoming more common'. It also added

"it is most important to remember that successful action in one part of the country has its reaction in other parts, and that every improvement in salaries or conditions in one place makes similar improvement easier to secure in another".<sup>13</sup>

'Its report suggests that 1918/1919 was an unprecedented year for the Salaries Committee. Its Chairman was working full-time in local association/local education authority negotiations. The Divisional Secretaries were solely engaged in the salary campaign and its office in the Union was supplying information, regarding salaries, to a very large number of associations and quite often, accompanying teachers conferring with their Education Committees.

In May 1918, 240 certificated teachers in Carmarthenshire had gone on strike, supported, according to the Daily Herald, by all 'Trades Unionists and Labour organisations' around the district. Irish teachers had a one-day general strike in ninety-eight per cent of the schools, with a cycling corps of pickets, for a substantial war bonus in November. In early 1919, five hundred elementary and secondary teachers handed in their strike notices to Merthyr local education authority. The authority offered to pay the result of the Rhondda teachers arbitration award to the Merthyr teachers but they refused it. A compromise without a strike was achieved - the pay award doubling what Merthyr originally offered.<sup>14</sup> There was considerable unrest in the West Riding of Yorkshire, especially in Mexborough.<sup>15</sup> In Sunderland and Middlesbrough, notices were handed in - seven hundred teachers in Sunderland.<sup>16</sup> In

April, all Pembrokeshire elementary schools were closed and a public meeting called upon the Education Committee to negotiate with the teachers.<sup>17</sup> A strike was threatened in Worcestershire,<sup>18</sup> in Peterborough and Bristol.<sup>19</sup>

The rapid deterioration of the education service, teachers' strikes and industrial union organisation and the sharp movement towards the Labour Party or trade union alliances were a major cause of concern to the Lloyd George coalition government. The question of post-war reconstruction and a stable society had to be planned in a situation of war and domestic crisis in which trade union power was on the offensive. Increasingly the position of teachers in the post-war period was seen as pivotal to the future of a reliable education since and a reconstructed state. This was not just a question of the Government, and then Fisher, the new President of the Board of Education, planning and connecting people to their vision of education, it was also the main idea of the Left. The Labour Movement was surging forward - locally and nationally. The publication by the Labour Party, in 1918, of their socialist programme, Labour and the New Social Order laid great stress on education as the means by which other social changes could occur. The Labour Party looked to teachers for support and help in constructing the 'New Social Order'.

The movement towards a forward union policy on salaries and conditions by the National Union of Teachers and the drift towards the Labour Party have been mentioned. It will be noted that within the Union there was a strong reaction to Labour Party affiliation; arguments came from the Church and voluntary teachers' sections, the rural teachers, Conservative Party members on the Executive and those who argued for civil service status or a professional register. Their support was strong. It was to these people that Fisher and The Times Educational Supplement addressed its arguments. Yet there is no clear division in the Union

between the Left and Right - towards Labour and partisanship or professionalism and neutrality. The whole tenor of the period is one where great changes in society were envisaged - both sides were planning a new deal. For many teachers it must have been a question of which post-war utopia was possible and many Labour teachers used the term professional constantly. It is to this debate, a watershed for teachers and many other working or middle class workers, called brain-workers<sup>20</sup> or 'intellectual workers',<sup>21</sup> or the black-coated proletariat<sup>22</sup> or craft professionals<sup>23</sup> by observers, which I now turn.

"Fisher argued in August 1917 to the Cabinet that the expenditure on teacher supply and conditions was necessary to improve the 'quality' of teachers and remove discontent - "inasmuch as at present revolutionary movements were to no small degree fermented by discontented school teachers".<sup>24</sup>

In a letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Austen Chamberlain, in November 1919, he again referred to teachers as a social danger —

"You will readily appreciate the influence of the teachers in the country and the effect which a disconcerted body of over 160,000 teachers may easily have in keeping alive increasing social and industrial unrest".<sup>25</sup>

Fisher moved forward in two ways. He set up a departmental enquiry into teacher pay scales in 1917 and on its recommendation in February 1918, introduced a system of percentage grants to local education authorities to help with the remuneration of teachers. He also created the 1918 Superannuation Act for teachers which was a non-contributory pension scheme similar to the Civil Service scheme. Lastly, he eventually created the 'Standing Joint Committee' (on a Provisional Minimum Scale of Salaries for Teachers in Public Elementary Schools), later known as the Burnham Committee.<sup>26</sup>



Throughout this period, from 1917 to 1918, Fisher made speeches throughout the country in support of his Education Bill. Then, and in 1919, he argued strongly for a new deal for teachers and in return, a new set of responsibilities and attitudes from teachers. Fisher after some consideration rejected the argument that teachers should be civil servants and later tried to persuade teachers that they could become one of the liberal professions. Whatever he argued, his private comments to colleagues in the Cabinet that the teacher was a social danger should also be borne in mind (something he later avoided doing in his autobiography).<sup>27</sup>

In his autobiography Fisher writes of his rejection of the proposal that teachers should be civil servants, appointed and paid by the State - his main grounds were that this would be deleterious to educational freedom and experimentation and would create too large a burden for the Board of Education. A report to the Secretary of the Board of Education on the 31st January, 1917, six weeks after Fisher's appointment as President of the Board, suggests other reasons, which in this period of educational and teacher unrest, have a more likely validity.

The Report<sup>28</sup> started with the difficulties of the 'civil service solution'. If the whole cost of the teachers' salaries were paid by the Exchequer, then the teachers would ask for parity with the highest local salary scale, yet this 'levelling-up' as it would be in most cases, would annoy the 'strong sections' of the NUT, in areas like London, who were not keen on the civil service solution anyway. The certificated teachers, the 'best qualified' were unevenly distributed across the country.<sup>29</sup> How could the State re-distribute them? Similarly uniformity between teaching grades would be a difficulty, and

also the Board would have to take powers of staff dismissal. This last point becomes important in the Report - the State would have to guarantee employment as well as judge competence. The high visibility of the State as the teachers' employer would lead to direct agitation for salary increases and "The State Department of Education would necessarily appear from time to time...as an obstacle to educational progress."<sup>30</sup> Agreeing with the version in Fisher's memoirs that a State teaching force is inimical to the traditions of 'English Education' and its securing of freedom, the writers felt that 'certain Local Education Authorities' had been a greater threat to freedom than either the Board or its Inspectors. But,

"The decisive consideration seems to me to be that the teaching profession as a whole is now both much more conscious of its unity and its rights and much more powerful than it was in the days of 'payment by results'".<sup>31</sup>

The tone of the Report is that the State would have to find other ways of solving the teacher problem than making them civil servants. It would not only become enmeshed in arbitration between teachers, it would be openly a target for the powerful, conscious unity of the teachers. The State would have to act, in particular ways and general direction, as the teachers' employer. If Fisher was concerned about the social danger of teachers, this was an option that would not reduce his concern and did not appear feasible. Other ways had to be explored.

It is of some interest that the idea of being part of the civil service was treated favourably by an element within teaching. Goldstone, in an article in The Times Educational Supplement, suggested that teachers wanted the move from municipal control to reduce the variation between salary scales, increase fixed tenure and improve pensions.<sup>32</sup> [It was this article that seems to have been used by the Board Secretary in his report on civil service status.] The following week, a 'Times' correspondent stated that teachers were increasingly in

favour of civil service status —

"The present discontent of a very large number of teachers has led them to consider desirable at least one of the present Civil Service conditions which is a hindrance to the effectiveness of the teaching profession. That condition is fixity of tenure... There is precisely the same sort of distrust between teachers and their employers that initiates the relations between employer and employed all over the country."<sup>33</sup>

The supporters of this proposal seem likely to have been rural teachers, faced with powerful local employers, and looking towards the pay and working conditions available in the urban areas. C.W. Crook confirmed this view when, a year later in his TES column, he thought "The large associations and particular London, were against, the smaller ones in favour".<sup>34</sup> Although it was never directly offered as an option for teachers it seemed to have provided a convenient way of solving the rural and country town teachers' problems. It little mattered that it might well involve dissolving the Union or giving up their freedom to act politically (which was dubious anyway),<sup>35</sup> as these were the conditions of Civil Service membership, current at the time.

The Reconstruction aims of the Government included a significant place for education. This was a reflection of the State of the education service during the War and its pivotal position in a renewed society. War, to Fisher, had given the State the great opportunity to remodel the education system. He used this opportunity to argue in the Cabinet for the previously shelved plans of the Board to expand the education system. The new Education Act of 1918 abolished all pre-fourteen years school exceptions (ending the half-time system in the textile industry), extended the public provision of higher education and planned a system of continuation schools (after elementary school-leaving age); it also provided for the creation of nursery schools and public scholarships in secondary education.

Fisher argued consistently for a new, patriotic teaching force, one capable of working the new investment in 'human capital', and capable of making better connections with the business world. Teachers would be vital, he argued during the Education Bill readings, in the production of good citizens, in the creation of the civic spirit. Fisher's vision was long-term - the creation of a societal harmony, of investment in skill and education and discussion between capital and labour.<sup>36</sup> This was not the position or concern of many of the local education authorities, of the Treasury and some employers.<sup>37</sup>

The creation of "an efficient and devoted corps of teachers"<sup>38</sup> for Fisher came to involve a number of overlapping points, on professionalism and responsibility in the Union, the revival of the Teachers' Registration Council and service to the State. All serve to change the direction he privately felt teachers were taking by 1918. A comprehensive report of a speech he gave to a local association of the NUT in Sheffield in 1918 illustrates his strategy.<sup>39</sup>

He argued that the State had developed a direct interest in the remuneration and position of the teaching profession though they were still employed and paid by local education authorities. He detailed the 'direct interest' - the Superannuation Act, the fixing of salary minima and a Parliamentary grant toward teacher salary costs. The system might have had faults but it was changed now —

"Don't let us, because here and there we may find a Local Education Authority which does not rise to the height of its responsibilities, do not let us condemn the system..."<sup>40</sup>

This statement is ironic as up and down the country, disputes, negotiations and resignations were in full swing. But it is essential to his argument. Now the State guaranteed the fair treatment of the teacher, it expected new results. Fisher laid stress, here and

elsewhere, on the need for unity in the teaching profession - a new flexibility towards work in teaching implied movement between different branches of teaching (particularly between elementary and secondary schooling).

In return, he criticized the National Union of Teachers. It was effective in looking after the material interests of teachers but this was no longer necessary now the State safeguarded the profession. It should instead concentrate its activities on the "spiritual and intellectual interests of the teacher's work".<sup>41</sup> What he meant by that was a humanistic spirit of enquiry and patriotism, appreciation not criticism, that should distinguish teaching and teachers. The profession would become more interesting and varied and full of opportunity for its members.

At the same time, the State now expected teachers to perform a civic service

"analogous....to the functions performed by members of the Civil Service and just as the State does not tolerate any perfunctory discharge of duties on the part of its Civil Servants, so the State will expect, and will receive from the teaching profession a measure of unstinted and zealous service on behalf of the childhood of the country".<sup>42</sup>

In effect, Fisher argued that a new direction was now in force in the education system, the Union could dismantle its politicking and trade union actions and that the State would safeguard teachers. They would be unified, concerned with their craft skills and intellectual development and give a recognised public service of quality.

His audience was not just at Sheffield but nationally, and, at Hamilton House, the NUT headquarters. During the same period as numerous salary disputes and the continuing discussions about Labour policy and trade union action (a direction Fisher was concerned about)

he offered teachers another vision - of peace and tranquillity, of status without struggle, of craft and skill unhampered by social poverty.

As his Parliamentary Secretary stated in a letter to The Times Educational Supplement,

"whatever might be the drawbacks of the teaching profession, the possibilities of valuable service to the State which it provided were very great".<sup>43</sup>

Service in the future was to be in aiding industrial competition and in the continuation of a patriotic and civic-minded curriculum.<sup>44</sup>

For these two aims, competition and civic spirit, different teachers would be needed - not teachers choosing the partisanship of labour.

Fisher mentioned the unity of the profession and suggested that the Teachers' Registration Council was the body all parts of the profession could gather within. The ideal of a profession is one which was expressed early in the NUT history - never defined, it always implied escape from the petty tyrannies of school managers, the Church and the Inspectorate; a path to freedom and a way out. An earlier Teachers' Registration Council had ended in 1908 because of the implacable hostility of the NUT - it involved a two column register, the first, Column A, a list of all certificated elementary teachers, supplied by the Board of Education, and the second, Column B, by application and a fee of one guinea by secondary teachers with a degree. Not unity of the profession as seen by the NUT, nor any kind of move toward self-government. Self-government from the Board of Education which controlled it - a paradoxical and unsatisfactory situation which continued in the new Teachers' Registration Council, in the years following the demise of its predecessor. The power the teachers wanted was control over access to teaching, in other words, control over qualification. The State controlled certification and altered (diluted) the conditions of entry

to suit supply, allowing uncertificated teachers to increase in number and inventing supplementary teachers - which in turn, decreased the market value of the certificate, the teacher's wage. As the Board refused to give any official recognition or standing to the new Register, it also failed to recruit well.<sup>45</sup>

The Register always involved talk of responsibilities but these lay mainly on the teacher. Talk of a 'collegiate spirit', 'professional standards', a 'vocation', 'honour', 'regulation and responsibility' and 'sacrifice'<sup>46</sup> were so much hot air. The illusion of self-government did not fool the elementary teachers, what they required was not in the TRC.

Yet, in 1918 to 1919, the Council was being promoted heavily, by Fisher, by The Times Educational Supplement and by some members of the NUT. As the Union became more politically and industrially active, it became opposed in argument by people who ascribed all the new virtues and requirements of teachers to the Council. As one was partisan, the other was for unity, as one was a section of teachers, the other was for all. Never mind that the NUT existed in fact and deed, and the Council was a shadow, it was the idea of a Council and the ideal of the required teacher that was being pushed for the support of the public but more importantly, the teachers. The Times had a leading article, one of the first, that argued for a united profession, not a Labour-affiliated NUT, built on the TRC, though,

"outside the fact [of its existence] is apparently unknown, and, inside, it is often forgotten."<sup>47</sup>

This did not stop The Times describing it as the only body capable of promoting the new education reform programmes, and if finance was a problem, the Treasury, with Fisher's help, might support it, without,

of course, prejudicing its independence.

On February 22nd that year, the day after the Register had been published with the names of relatively few teachers on it, the Times Educational Supplement made an 'urgent appeal to all teachers', though it meant all qualified teachers (thereby excluding a large number of elementary teachers), to join the Council.

From 1917 onwards, the Times Educational Supplement constantly argued that a new profession of teaching had come into existence. Present conditions of work and pay were poor and discontent was widespread, it acknowledged, yet a bold policy, 'Mr. Fisher's opportunity', could save the situation.<sup>48</sup> This editorial policy, 'the noble teaching profession' was formed at the same time as the meeting in Birmingham of the Union militants on salary action and labour affiliation, in January 1917. The policy began when it looked to the Times Educational Supplement that the Government, to increase teacher supply, was likely to sanction the return of large numbers of supplementary or pupil teachers<sup>49</sup> but with Fisher its call for a 'new profession' approach was answered. In The Times' view, teacher supply was indistinguishable from the registration of teachers, the Teachers' Registration Council, and the creation of a National Teaching Service. This was a forward policy, one in tune with Fisher and the Reconstruction committee, and its audience was teachers and the educational administrators. In harmony, together eligible for registration, teachers and administrators would fight for reform.

Always expressing sympathy for the actions of the Union, and allowing its officers, Crook and Goldstone, a Union Note Column in the Times Educational Supplement it tried to bypass the effect of the Union pressure. Not until August 1918 did its irritation at the continuing



increase in militant action and rhetoric by Union associations tell. Its argument had become one in which dignity in discussion with local authority employers and not threats would allow the Government to safeguard the teachers' position. Strikes would only 'harden the hearts' of the Councils and the Government.<sup>50</sup>

The appeal to teachers was built around a rhetoric of 'noble and dignified' 'vocation' 'responsibilities' and 'patriotism'.<sup>51</sup> Whenever possible in editorials or reports of speeches by Fisher or others with the same argument, The Times Educational Supplement argued the 'new profession' line.

Lord Haldane, the Lord Chancellor and a person close to Fisher, who had argued since 1913 within the Government for a new Education Act and a national system of education to 'stabilise democracy',<sup>52</sup> and to counter 'intense economic competition' from abroad<sup>53</sup>, was also reported. He followed, or preceded, the TES line - democracy and education, a national organised profession and greater social status and salaries for teachers.<sup>54</sup>

Yet, it was a special kind of unity wanted by Fisher, Haldane and The Times Educational Supplement. It would include university lecturers, public schoolteachers, and secondary teachers but only the certificated elementary teacher. It would exclude, and in practice the Register did so, the uncertificated teachers. These teachers were in the forefront of the fight for an industrial union policy, Trades council membership and in favour of equal pay in teaching. As the Union considered admission of uncertificated teachers into membership throughout 1918, and, as local associations of teachers united to fight local employers, the Times Educational Supplement made it clear that they were not just excluding the uncertificated but a policy and a direction.

It was cant for the Board of Education to publish, in its Departmental Committee Report on salary scales<sup>55</sup> -

"We may, however, look forward to a time when admission to the profession will be limited to persons who have reached accepted standards of education and training, a result which will be of great benefit to national education"

when the Board always controlled entry qualifications into teaching and had moved them to match any problems of teacher supply; it was just this situation that the Union policy of professional control was meant to be against. In this way, then, the policy of The Times and the Board was contrary to Union policy - it did not treat the Union as a basis for teacher unity but tried to create another basis, the Register, and its view of unity would actually disunite the teachers even more by excluding a large section.

With the support of some teachers,<sup>56</sup> The Teachers' Registration Council spent several years, aided by The Times, trying to convince the rest of the teachers that if only they joined together, they would by this act, 'recognise' themselves and make it inevitable that the Government would recognise them as "the body to decide the qualifications and technical ability necessary to become a teacher".<sup>57</sup> Calls for unity in the profession were, then, increasingly opposed to the actions of the Union members to create unity through action and policy. The stronger their determination to control, to finally wrest some power from their employers, the louder became the claims for a unity based on the Register, on vocation, neutrality and professional responsibility. The State, through Fisher, offered just enough in the way of 'safeguarding' and reviving old plans for education<sup>58</sup> to 'head off' teachers joining, actively leading, an insurgent labour movement - Fisher's fear.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER 6

1. Times Educational Supplement, Jan. 18, 1917.
2. Times Educational Supplement, Jan. 18, 1917.
3. Sherington, p.84.
4. Sherington, p.49.
5. Schoolmaster, Jan 15, 1919.
6. Times Educational Supplement, Jan. 17,1918. Probably five times as many women certificated as men, eleven times as many uncertificated. Crook.
7. Schoolmaster, Jan. 15, 1919.
8. Sherington, p.49 - including a large number of 11 + 12 year olds.
9. The Union had to take notice of the power of these dilutees - Barbara Drake (1929) 'Women in Trade Unions' Allen & Unwin makes a general point applicable to teachers - "skilled men are exposed to....grave risks by leaving unorganised the semi-skilled and unskilled women from whose numbers may be drawn their most dangerous trade competitors", p.205.
10. Times Educational Supplement, Jan. 18, 1917 - 'London, The Supply of Teachers'.
11. Times Educational Supplement, Jan. 18, 1917 - 'London, The Supply of Teachers'.
12. Times Educational Supplement, Nov. 21, 1918.
13. Salaries Committee, Annual Report, NUT, 1919.
14. Daily Herald, March 31, 1919.
15. Daily Herald, April 1, 1919.
16. Daily Herald, April 5, 1919.

17. Daily Herald, April 12, 1919.
18. Daily Herald, April 27, 1919.
19. Daily Herald, May 20, 1919.
20. Tawney, R.H. (1921) 'The Acquisitive Society' Bell.
21. William MacDonald (1923) 'The Intellectual Worker' Cape.
22. Daily Herald, April 21, 1919.
23. Times Educational Supplement, April 24, 1919.
24. Sherington, p.127.
25. Sherington, p.146.
26. Tropp, p.212-213 & Ward, L.O. 'H.A.L. Fisher and the Teachers' in Brit. Journal of Educ. Studies, 1981.
27. H.A.L. Fisher (1940) An Unfinished Autobiography, OUP.
28. School Teachers as Civil Servants 1916-1932, PRO ED/24 1736.
29. Per thousand pupils; London 22.4 certificated teacher to 6 uncertificated; Portsmouth 21.6 to 2.2 and Preston 10.7 to 10.1. PRO ED/24 1736.
30. PRO ED/24 1736.
31. PRO ED/24 1736.
32. Times Educational Supplement, Jan. 11, 1917.
33. The Times, Jan. 25, 1917.
34. Times Educational Supplement, Sept. 19, 1918.
35. A point made by Howard 'Unrest Amongst Teachers', Socialist Review, Jan/Mar. 1920. He referred to the idea as selling the teacher's birthright for a 'mess of pottage'.
36. Times Educational Supplement, Feb. 7, 1918. Speech at Hanley, Staffs.
37. Daily Herald, Feb. 23, 1918. Memorandum on Education, Federation of British Industries.

38. Times Educational Supplement, March 1, 1917.
39. Times Educational Supplement, Dec. 12, 1918.
40. Times Educational Supplement, Dec. 12, 1918.
41. Times Educational Supplement, Dec. 18, 1918.
42. Times Educational Supplement, Dec. 18, 1918.
43. Herbert Lewis, Feb. 27, Times Educational Supplement, 1919.
44. Fisher, Times Educational Supplement, March 8, 1917.
45. Baron G. 'The Teachers' Registration Movement' BJES, Vol. 2, 1953.
46. J.L. Paton, 'The Teachers Register and its Possibilities'  
Contemporary Review, Aug. 1912.
47. Reported in the Times Educational Supplement, 25 Jan. 1917.
48. Times Educational Supplement, Jan. 25, Feb. 22 and April 12, 1917.  
April 19, 1917.
49. Times Educational Supplement, Jan. 25, 1917.
50. Times Educational Supplement, Feb. 1, 1917.
51. Times Educational Supplement, Sept. 27, 1917.
52. Sherington, p.23-6, 1913.
53. Sherington, p.57, March 1916.
54. Times Educational Supplement, Jan 31, 1918, speech in Glasgow.
55. Times Educational Supplement, Feb. 7, 1918.
56. Crook and Bintliff, Conservative ex-Presidents of the NUT.
57. TRC Advert, Schoolmaster March 6, 1920. 'Why you should  
become a Registered Teacher' by Walter Bintliff ex NUT President.
58. Sherington's view is that the 1918 Act was a revision of  
Haldane's 1913 proposals.

## 7. TEACHERS AND SOCIALIST IDEAS

Teachers were attracted to the Labour Party and to socialist ideas and plans in significant numbers between 1915 and 1925. It was not just a question of the Conservative party being seen as the party of economy and anti-elementary education nor the failure of the Coalition Government's Education Act. Socialist ideas, from the Fabians to the syndicalists, had percolated discussions among teachers about the role of elementary education and the elementary teachers and its relation to the State. The contradiction between teachers and their employers is a constant in conference debates and Schoolmaster correspondence from the inception of the Union. For many teachers, ideas from the Fabians or guild socialists had been grafted on to the analysis of this contradiction and key words like 'professional self-government' began to alter in meaning and consequently in proposed operation as they became suffused with socialist terminology about the State, social responsibility, unity of the working class and the nature of work.

The influence of socialist writers like Sydney and Beatrice Webb, G.D.H. Cole, H.G. Wells, R.H. Tawney, and significantly in this period, a writer like A.S. Neill (who joined the socialism of the guild socialists to a detailed if idiosyncratic intervention in the New Education discussion) was important to teachers. Although ideas and programmes differed they jointly offered a new vision of teaching as a major service in the reconstruction of society, the antithesis of the teachers' conditions of work at the time. Other white collar workers were influenced by this new role for the social service sector in a socialist society and their placement within a category defined as the 'intellectual' working class. The very strength of these ideas can be gauged by reference to Fisher's ideas on professionalism and

service to the State. Winning the ideological battle over teachers' class identity was a matter of some concern to elements of the employing class within the central state. The 'Hearts and minds' of state employees, re-defined as of value to the stable working of society, were at stake.

The Labour Party had radically re-organised its constitution and its character in 1918. It was now possible to join as an individual and not either as a part of a union membership or within a socialist society, like the Independent Labour Party. The old federation of trade unions, socialist societies and Trades and Labour Councils, joined together to maintain a Labour presence in Parliament was now becoming a socialist party, organised in branches throughout the country. Francis Williams, in his Labour Party history, described it as a 'new moral force' in British politics. It deliberately widened its appeal to "producers whether by hand or brain"<sup>1</sup> and aimed to recruit them by means of mass individual membership. Its programme 'Labour and the New Social Order' was one of national ownership of basic industries. It appealed to all the community to involve themselves in the creation of a new social order by the application of science and rationality to the running of every branch of society, by planned cooperation and the 'widest possible participation in power'.<sup>2</sup> It argued for a legal basic wage and a system of public work programmes, including schools.<sup>3</sup>

In other words, for teachers, it was matching their financial problems with solutions, their educational poverty with expansion and their lack of power and control in their 'industry' by participation and public ownership. The feeling of real change was also the Labour attraction to teachers.

Although Bradford was a leading light of the Trades Councils in educational reform, The Daily Herald<sup>4</sup> regularly reported meetings of Trades Councils and their local actions on education provision, on recruitment of teachers' associations or the progress of the Burston inquiry. Teachers' strikes were always reported in the paper and the local Trades Councils concern for 'uncertificated teachers' regularly mentioned<sup>5</sup> as was equal pay, NUT conferences and militarism in schools. By 1919, dispute and strike reports of the teachers were appearing weekly. The Daily Herald, representing the more active or even syndicalist policy of militant trade unionism, stated clearly its position on teachers in social reform, and, in doing so, the appeal to teachers of Labour -

"...The educational policy of the capitalist parties neglects the fact that all education rests upon the teacher. While we continue to pay our teachers as if they were errand boys, and to expect them to teach impossibly large classes in impossibly ill-equipped and ugly buildings, while we deny to them all real liberty of teaching and of thought, and train them at colleges which are a laughing stock and a sham, how can we expect educational results? The teachers themselves must be the potent force in the regeneration of the educational system, and the Labour Party will use all its strength to secure for the teachers, men and women alike, the fullest measure of justice and recognition."<sup>6</sup>

Instead of being the servants of a penny-pinching system, Labour offered to teachers the chance to help, indeed be the 'potent force' in educational regeneration. Not only would Labour help with the question of salaries but with much more, the question of participation and control. This, I argue, is a consistent strand in teachers' problems - their main contradiction in work was against the employer, his interests and work conditions. Labour was offering to the 'brain worker' the chance to alter the conditions of employment - to be released from the tyrannies of the past. At the same time, it matched their concern for the educational service, in results and reform.



The attraction of the Labour programme 'Labour and the New Social Order' and the practical support teachers' associations received from Trades Councils and Labour councillors was only one part of the relationship between teachers and Labour.

Socialist thinkers like H.G. Wells had earlier stressed the place that teachers would hold under socialism. Whether teachers should be regarded as middle-class or 'brain-workers', Wells in 'New Worlds for Old' appealed to them directly. Socialism was a moral and intellectual process and it was just the enterprise that could help the middle-classes overcome 'their depression, financial worries and lack of courage.'<sup>7</sup> Indeed, Wells placed teachers at the heart of this new moral purpose. Teachers (widely defined to include not only schoolteachers, but books, discussion groups and universities) could 'collectively' renew the 'collective mind'.<sup>8</sup> Constructive socialism needed teachers —

'The most creative profession of all,...that great calling which with each generation renews the world's circle of ideas'.

Instead of being the exploited, isolated servants of local employers, their purpose was to renew the national culture; socialism would depend on them. This element of attraction may not have converted many teachers but those it did would obviously see teaching in a new light - useful, essential, dynamic etc.<sup>9</sup>

Wells was keen that his readers understood exactly what difference socialism would bring to their lives, and the elementary teacher was one of his two examples. His Utopian vision altered and improved the school layout and provision, even the responsiveness of the children; it mentions the improved salary, pensions and insurance. It involved the notion of vocation —

"...under Socialist conditions, it cannot be too clearly understood that all the reasons the contemporary Trade Unionist finds against extra work and unfair work will have disappeared."<sup>10</sup>

He adds further information about quality housing, gardens and electric power. The vision is of interest - it is a secular, enhanced version, a 'modern' version, of the teachers' aims in organising together: a good education service, benefits to children, release from poverty and a public service or vocation were all represented in this new form.

The collectivist or administrative socialism of the Fabians, the Webbs in particular, was improving the educational facilities in London since the 1890's and it was Sydney Webb who drafted the outline of the Labour programme 'Labour and the New Social Order', with its new role for education. In a long address to teachers, published as a Fabian Tract, 'The Teacher in Politics' he argued for a natural alliance between the Labour Party and the teaching profession.<sup>11</sup> A different appeal, almost classless in approach, Webb argues for a natural technical expertise partnership in a democracy between the teachers and administration which goes further than questions of socialism or indeed politics at all. In order, Webb praises the 'ubiquitous' Union, the Teachers' Registration Council, and the campaign for salary scales and decent conditions of service but it is to the service function he turns with emphasis.<sup>12</sup> Webb explained his theory of democracy as an interaction between two representative groups - the consumers and the producers (or professions). The State acts as an arbitrator and decision-maker between them "they decide only what comes before them".<sup>13</sup> His point is that teachers should, and do, act on behalf of all the community in insisting on effective access<sup>14</sup> to the whole field of education. [According to the 1918 Conference, this phrase should mean a socially equal national system not just a question of access - it is certainly ambiguous here.] The Labour Party was the natural party of education —

"It is the newly reconstituted party of the workers 'by hand or by brain' - not the Conservative or Liberal Party - that nowadays supplies the Minister of Education with the driving force of educational reforms."<sup>15</sup>

It is the Labour Party that supported teachers in demanding educational advance and improved conditions of service.

His appeal to the teachers is that they should provide the programme of reform to the Labour Party and give authoritative criticism to their proposals. The 'Teaching Profession' as a whole should answer the multitude of questions he asks of them (on nursery education, staff duties, school room design etc.) - it should be "promoting changes in the public organisation of the State".<sup>16</sup> He sees the engine of this advice as Professional Advisory Committees to all the Education Authorities.

Again, this reaffirms for the Union, in its policy, and for teachers generally, the place, a professional place perhaps, in the councils of the State on educational matters. Although this is not a Wellsian socialist vision that is offered, it is a practical administrative socialism that showed teachers exactly how their counsels would fit in. This was a bargain to be struck with the Labour Party, a Party expected into power soon in post-war Britain.<sup>17</sup>

It has already been argued that syndicalism was a major force in the Labour alliance with teachers that led to successful strike in the Rhondda. This strike was not only a major step forward for the alliance in South Wales but nationally - its effect ran throughout the Union in 1919. Its leading figures, particularly W.G. Cove, were to play a major part in Union counsels from that time on. But the Rhondda strike was specific - it had a mixture of teacher-miner cooperation, a forward syndicalist policy in the Miners' Union (MFGB) and the involvement of Plebs League tutors. Its effect was great but the

syndicalism or industrial unionism that created it - was it peculiar to the South Wales valleys?

Two years before the strike, G.D. Bell of the Teachers' Labour League and a member of the Union Executive, had, during the Executive debate on Labour affiliation, referred to the question of syndicalism.<sup>18</sup> He denied that there was any conflict of interest between the professional and the trade union approach to teaching. For him, the medical profession was

"The best example of syndicalism that existed in this country, it absolutely owned and controlled the medical service of this country."<sup>19</sup>

Syndicalism was the term used in the Union by its left wing, Bell and later, Cove, to discuss not only industrial action by all teachers but industrial control. Although it was also referred to as self-government and easily moved into other shades of meaning used by their opponents (the Conservative 'professionals') its use was specific - through strikes and direct action (a point sometimes under-emphasised), control over the industry would be obtained. It also was part of a movement that expected other workers in other industries to be part of that forward movement. It had a strong critique of the role of the State and, as Bob Holton describes it, it

"asserted the primary importance of working class self-reliance at the point of production free from coercive bureaucratic apparatus."<sup>20</sup>

This was a sense, congruent with professional control, in which it was used by Bell and Cove. It was well known in the Union as to their advocacy of this philosophy and was bandied about in Conference debates.

A popular (and weaker) version of syndicalism was the development of guild socialism. This did not refer directly to industrial action but concentrated upon the question of practical worker control. The idea of guild socialism was expounded in the journal,

New Age.<sup>21</sup> After 1911, this journal addressed itself to 'workers of hand and brain' in arguing for workers' corporations controlling and managing their industries. During the course of the War, the actual workers' control of the shop stewards movement and the ideas of guild socialism, in some cases, came very close together; it influenced the Miners' Federation 1919 demand for public ownership and workers' control.<sup>22</sup>

Guild socialism was felt by its adherents to be qualitatively different to the 'collectivist' strand of socialism, exemplified by the Webbs, and the independent labour representation strand, seen in the Independent Labour Party. It based itself on a denunciation of a capitalist system which saw workers as no more than 'living' tools in the production process, deserving no consideration or freedom. Work being central to life, the workers could never be fully satisfied nor able to fully serve the community until they controlled the means of production - in the workplace by self-government. This self-government would operate through Guilds, based on trade unions, and a policy of 'encroaching control'. This policy was not the same as joint workers' control, as seen in the works committee or in 'Whitleyism' but exclusive control at the point of production. The guild would join with consumers when deciding on the choice and quantity of a commodity to be produced. Guild socialism involved, as one of the conditions necessary for its successful operation, joining all workers, including supervisory and professional personnel into a single union per industry.

The appeal of guild socialism in the Union was again its congruency to professional self-government. On the question of practical control over industry, it appealed directly to the 'brain-workers' or management and supervisory staff. No workers' control could be effective without them. Cole, in 1920, discussing the National Guilds' League, talks of its appeal to professional workers, such as teachers —

"it has concentrated its propaganda work entirely upon the question of industrial and professional self-government".<sup>23</sup>

Cole argued that it was foolish to refuse to recognise the importance of the 'technical and professional elements',<sup>24</sup> or to see them as entirely the 'adherents of capitalism'.<sup>25</sup> These workers were underpaid and exploited and yet were under pressure to make a new class alliance. For Cole, the 'middle section',<sup>26</sup> of society, the professional, managerial and staff grades, were being asked to decide whether to join up with the capitalist class or the working class - to maintain or overthrow the social order. This choice

"does not, of course, present itself, in the same form to all the members of the grades and classes in question".<sup>27</sup>

Yet, because the employers 'tyrannise' and refuse to negotiate or 'recognise' these workers,

'it is usually not long before an association....begins to consider the propriety of an alliance with the working class, or before its members as individuals begin to vote Labour or link up with the Labour Party...'28

The drive towards Labour was both political and economic (i.e. rising cost of living). Cole could easily be describing the movement of teachers in this section but he is also thinking of journalists, clerks, local government workers and so on.

Even in 1913, Cove was describing guild socialism as self-government —

"in fact, they are to resemble in their main characteristics the self-governing professions, the doctors and lawyers, of the present".<sup>29</sup>

In a description which echoes his opponent S. Webb (in The Teacher and Politics), Cole argued that

"The internal management and control of each industry or service must be placed, as a trust on behalf of the community, in the hands of the worker engaged in it; but he holds no less strongly that full provision must be made for the representation and safeguarding of the consumer's point of view."<sup>30</sup>

Again, socialism was equated with self-government and with workers' control. Later in the book, the equation is made directly between teachers and their administration of the education system, subject, of course, to the 'ownership' of education, on behalf of the consumers, parents and children, by the State.

An entire chapter in 'Guild Socialism Restated' was given over to an analysis of how it would work in education. The teachers are portrayed as exploited wage slaves and their only salvation is — a 'fully self-governing profession',<sup>32</sup> freeing education from capitalism. This would be an education guild, highly democratic, capable of allowing schools to organise their own educational direction and controlling qualification and entry (though probably delegating this responsibility). The guild would meet locally and nationally, with the consumers, on cultural councils, within a cooperative relationship.

As Cole perceptively pointed out the success of these ideas in the post war period is that they were 'working with the grain',<sup>33</sup> of Union developments. Certainly in the NUT, guild socialism became another source of justification for Labour affiliation and socialism because it was attached to teacher aims — solving the main contradiction of their relations with employers.

W. W. Hill, a member of the Guilds' League and an NUT member (later, Editor of the Schoolmaster) proposed a conference amendment on self-government at the 1919 Annual Conference that was passed by a large majority.<sup>34</sup>

The idea of an education guild became popular with teachers.<sup>35</sup> Its best propagandist was A.S. Neill, a teacher who, in this period, exemplifies these different seemingly conflicting strands of teacher thought.

Throughout his first book, 'A Dominie's Log',<sup>36</sup> Neill illustrates the difficulties a socialist class teacher had during this period of turmoil, written as it was halfway through the war and at the beginning of the resurgence of the Union's salary campaign. Expressing fully his antipathy towards Inspectors, dull teachers, his local employers and a backward Union (The Educational Institute of Scotland) he revealed the contradictions of his work.

Neill was influenced by George Bernard Shaw, H.G. Wells,<sup>37</sup> and William Morris (in particular, 'News from Nowhere') but it was the journal, New Age, he<sup>38</sup> praised highly, the journal of the guild socialists —

"if the teachers are masters of the situation I wish every teacher in Scotland would get the New Age each week.... The magazine is pulsating with life and youth.... it is the only fearless journal I know".<sup>38</sup>

Throughout it is the tension between the practical conditions in which he worked and the socialist ideals in the classroom that is the main thrust of the book. The school, a small village school with a single classroom, was controlled by a School Board (the Boards continued to exist in Scotland after 1902). He described the Board members as "a few low idealed semi-illiterate farmers and pig dealers".<sup>39</sup> They had the 'haziest notion of the meaning of education',<sup>40</sup> and one or two of them were usually in dispute with the teacher. His own school was

"always filthy because the ashed playground is undrained. Broken windows stand for months; the plaster of the ceiling came down months ago and the lathes are still showing. The School Board does not worry; its avowed object is to keep down the rates at any price of meanness (some members are big ratepayers). The sanitary arrangements are a disgrace to a long suffering nation. Nothing is done."<sup>41</sup>

Regularly visited by Inspectors, who seemed to be more concerned with discipline than anything else, he objected to being reported on without being able to reply, but most of all, he objected to the fact that



"the School Board gets not a single word of criticism".<sup>42</sup>

In his curricular work he was definitely opposing the views or rather attitudes of the Board members and the other farmers, not only in the way they treated children but the range of experience he gave to the children. Some of his lessons were based on topics such as profit or capital and he encouraged them to think out their view of the topic, Neill argues that he was not indoctrinating them but making them heretics not socialists - 'I am trying to form minds that will question and destroy and rebuild',<sup>43</sup> 'Whose side are you on?' asked a pupil, meaning the people or the capitalist class. Neill replied 'I am with the majority'.<sup>44</sup>

So, the visionary socialism of Morris and Wells and the practical approach of the New Age helped Neill to create a way of working in his classroom and a way of criticising the teacher's conditions of employment. The guild would release teachers from the tyranny of the farmer/ratepayers and the Inspectors, to become free to really 'educate'. The guild would

'replace the Scotch Education Department. It will draw up its own scheme of instruction, fix the salaries of its members, appoint its own Inspectors, build its own schools. It will be directly responsible to the State which will remain the supreme authority'.<sup>45</sup>

Neill expressed clearly the mixture of socialism, trade unionism, humanistic educational enterprise and professional control which weaves in and out of these arguments among teachers. He was a socialist but had little faith in teachers because of their lack of action; he argued for an education guild but compared it to 'Law and Medicine'; he saw the State as the ultimate authority but in a way divorced from its past actions and representatives in the School Boards and Education Department. Yet it is clear what the conditions which provoked Neill and other teachers to resist were, to seek an alternative

organisation, to construct a new education system. It was a rallying call against ignorance associated with the control of a social class. This control was open and not covert. As the teachers, like Neill, resisted and organised and voted against this social control, we see elements within the State altering the aims of education, evaluating teachers' aims and appealing to them.

Although Neill is a single, well-known case and not 'representative' his influence was widespread - he connected the economic aspirations of the teachers as a collective force to their educational aims. Years later, William Howard in the Independent Labour Party journal, Socialist Review, in an article on teacher discontent and 'sweated' labour, while disagreeing with the idea of a Guild said that

'An ever increasing number (of teachers) are looking hopefully to the day when they will replace the Board of Education with a guild of their own as adumbrated by my friend, A.S. Neill, in 'The Dominies Log'.<sup>46</sup>

In fact Howard, trying to point out to his audience of I.L.P'ers,<sup>47</sup> the reasons for teacher discontent, and himself a teacher, summarises the appeal of visionary socialism to education and vice versa. It is this appeal which is a significant, though by no means the only, factor in the growing support of teachers for Labour affiliation and socialist ideas. The appeal is addressed here to the public —

[who] must be trained to appreciate the necessity of education not merely as a means to the enhancement of the beauty and dignity of life itself. They must be brought to see that without that vision which education can give, life is a truncated thing and its horizon circumscribed. And let me add, without that vision Socialism as an established reality is but a dream".<sup>48</sup>

Education is in a straitjacket, denying individuality and creativity - it is full of 'monotonous mechanism and stultifying routine',<sup>49</sup>.

It should move from the creation of 'efficient wage slaves' to a thought stimulating process producing 'thinking citizens'.<sup>50</sup>

So, in summary, visionary and collectivist socialism, the Labour Party programme, syndicalism and the new industrial policy, and guild socialism all combined in discussion and argument, between teachers and between teachers and other workers (for these ideas were, from 1912 and particularly in the late-War period, widespread among the working class) to generate critiques and proposals for the education service, its role in the 'new social order' and the central position of teachers in this process. An education guild, a forward industrial policy (involving strikes and recruitment of uncertificated teachers), professional self-government, and Labour Party affiliation or membership were not separate issues for teachers. They involved, to some degree or other, in some places or among some teachers more than others, the whole way teachers could see themselves and solutions to their problems (their conditions of work, educational purpose and relations with employers).

The significant appeal by the Labour Party in 'Labour and the New Social Order' and by the Guild Leagues to the 'brainworkers' was a major political recognition that there was a class of supervisory, managerial and white collar workers who were essential to capitalism and the employers and who would be equally essential to the workers in the 'New Age'.

White collar workers were growing rapidly in number. By 1918, there were eighteen white-collar unions represented in the TUC<sup>51</sup> and a number of associations, such as NALGO, the civil service and the teachers outside it. The TUC created the National Federation of Professional Workers, of which the NUT was a member, to liaise with associations outside its ranks. As Thomson points out,<sup>52</sup> there was a serious

movement in the post-war period to create a 'third-party' in industry —

'The staff workers who would be more allied to employers than to the general body of non-manual workers.<sup>53</sup>

The same discussions that the NUT had were occurring among this group of workers in Britain and abroad.<sup>54</sup> The scientists, during and after the War, were coming together to organise themselves in a union or a set of federated associations. As the MacLeods show, the question was one of political independence, qualifications and attitudes towards and directed from the manual workers.<sup>55</sup> The issue was the nature of this industrial and class alliance. The formation, in September 1919, was proposed of a Federation of Technical, Scientific and Professional Associations which would "support the representation of the professional and technical staffs as a 'Third Party',<sup>56</sup> on the industrial negotiating councils. As a direct and speedy response to this proposed Federation, the Labour Research Department<sup>57</sup> organised a conference to discuss the creation of a single union of professional workers. This became the basis for the National Federation of Professional Workers. It was reported by the journal of the Electrical Power Engineer (Feb. 20) as a possible

"quarter of a million technical, administrative and clerical workers....largely middle class in composition but definitely labour in sympathy".<sup>58</sup>

This Association (the EPEA) was also reported as saying at the Conference that

"if they and the manual workers unite on the basis of a mutual recognition of each other's claims, much will have been done to bring about in the industrial sphere that unity of workers 'by hand and brain' which the Labour Party is now striving to express in the sphere of political action".<sup>59</sup>

The battle then was between a Labour affiliated managerial class and one which saw itself as a 'Third Party' of professionals. The debate between

the forward policy in the Union and the arguments of Fisher etc. for a new 'professionalism' corresponds exactly to this wider debate among white collar workers.

Observers noted this tendency towards a 'Third Party' or class and a Labour Movement at the time. R.H. Tawney, in his book 'The Acquisitive Society' published in 1921, attacked capitalism as unjust and inefficient and argued that industry should be organised to give the best service to the community, that its workers should be paid 'honourably' and that it should be run by its direct representatives. Tawney was influenced, as can be seen, by the guild socialist arguments and wrote the book when a member of the National Executive Committee of the Guilds' League, although it had been published in part already, by the Fabian Society.<sup>60</sup> Tawney, in a chapter titled 'The Position of the Brain-worker' and subtitled 'The Growth of an Intellectual Proletariat' describes the class of 'under managers, experts and technicians' in a significant section

"it marks the emergence within the very heart of capitalist industry of a force which, both in status and in economic interest, is allied to the wage-earners rather than to the property owners, and the support of which is, nevertheless, vital to the continuance of the existing order ..... Almost the most important industrial question of the immediate future is in what direction it will throw its weight'.<sup>61</sup>

On the question of poor pay, poor tenure and poor employer management teachers are synonymous with the 'brain-worker' class. His argument was that the professionalisation of industry, that is, organised on the basis of function (rather like guilds) was the only solution to these ills. If in future there was to be any discipline in industry, it would be between colleagues, not from master to servant. In other words, the concept of 'service' would be restored to its major role in industry, not the creation of profit through exploitation. The

professional organisations, subject to consumer criticism etc. should run the service, the industry; it would be a collective responsibility.

Was the teacher, a 'brain-worker', an 'intellectual worker'? Although not directly mentioned by Tawney, this phrase was widely used to include teachers. MacDonald, two years later, described the teachers' work as intellectual even though it was often routine<sup>62</sup> for what the 'capitalist buys and exploits' was intelligence or skill. These people were neither capitalists or employers nor manual workers. The fact that MacDonald wrote a book in this period on that premise is, like Tawney's book, a sign that to observers at the time the question of a supervisory technical and white collar workers, and their future class trajectory, either as a Third Party or to Labour, was a crucial issue.

MacDonald argued that the intellectual worker (here, the teacher) was a labourer but with a product that was often intangible. They sold labour time to the employer in return for wages. The teacher was

'wholly dependent upon the employer.... The influence of the employer becomes overwhelmingly predominant in determining the form the work should take and the conditions under which the service shall be rendered'.<sup>63</sup>

The teachers' Union had attained some success in recent years although 'professional solidarity' had been previously slight,<sup>64</sup> he added that

"while the principles of syndicalism or trade union are still far from being generally accepted among intellectual workers as a whole, the entering wedge has long since been driven in...."<sup>65</sup>

and its main feature is a 'professional solidarity'.

However, for MacDonald, these workers are the 'Third Party' and will only succeed in uniting with the rest of the workers when there is a further modification of attitudes towards their trade unionism and a more conscious identification as wage-earners.

It was to stop the united front of hand and brain-workers that the re-creation of a professionalism defined in terms of vocation, increased social status, a national service and a neutral political ideology was formulated. State service workers, such as teachers, were re-defined by those elements of the State concerned with forward planning. Fisher and his friends, within and without the Government, and his ally, The Times, argued strenuously, faced with an insurgent teaching force, for teachers to be servants of the State yet have a degree of autonomy. They were to be, in common with other state employees, a 'Third Party', removed by ideology and social status from other members of the working class. The fact of their privileged status meant that they would have a licensed autonomy within boundaries now defined by their new role as industrial trainers and responsible patriots. This was the response to the 'social danger' thesis.

The socialist position, expressed in a number of different ideological arguments related to differing conceptions of the State, socialist elites or workers' control, generally placed teachers in a key position in the socialist regeneration of society. At the same time, although placing teachers within a new responsibility to 'society', socialist proposals depended greatly on the expertise, 'professionalism' and service ethic of the teachers (in common with the white collar or 'intellectual' working class). G.D.H. Cole's idea of 'working with the grain' of the wishes and aspirations of this group of workers in his proposals of guild socialism can be seen to be influential for a number of teachers in the way they formulate solutions to the problem of employment - the contradiction between the demands of employers and the needs of the teaching force.

Labour was the coming force; it held the main cards in an intellectual argument, built up over time, and there was a general realisation of the likelihood of an imminent Labour Government.

Wartime accelerated its appeal to teachers. Socialist ideas, argued from several quarters, influenced the way teachers saw themselves, their problems and their allies.



FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER 7

1. F. Williams (1947) 'Fifty Years March' Odhams, p.283.
2. F. Williams (1947) 'Fifty Years March' Odhams, p.281.
3. The 1918 Conference Res. on Education (The Bradford Charter) - "a genuine nationalisation of education"  
"The recognition of the teaching profession without distinction of grade, as one of the most valuable to the community", in 'Teacher in Politics', Webb.
4. Daily Herald, 1917-1919 Hastings T.C. March 10, 1917;  
Grays T.C., Feb. 16, 1918.
5. The Daily Herald and the Herald Leagues reflected a wide range of Left wing opinion - syndicalists, guild socialists and Christian Socialists - yet they were united by the notion of reform through action and saw the State as functioning on behalf of capital. Holton, B. (70) 'British Syndicalism 1900-1914', Pluto.
6. Daily Herald, Nov. 30, 1918. The Teacher's Charter.
7. Wells, H.G. (1908) 'New Worlds for Old' Constable.
8. Wells, H.G. (1908) 'New Worlds for Old', p.283.
9. It certainly influenced A.S. Neill, Domine's Log, p.102 - see later.
10. Wells, H.G. p. 312 nb. Wells was consistent. Letter in Schoolmaster 1920, May 29th "Teachers are treated meanly, overworked, underpaid - insufficiently respected. Cheap teachers mean a jerry-built social system. To sweat your teachers is to prepare a revolution."
11. S. Webb (1918) 'The Teacher in Politics' Sept. 1918, Fab. Tract, 187.

12. The Webbs' concern for the educational service was well-known but at the turn of the century their attitude to teachers was "curiously ambivalent" (Brennan, E.J. '75' 'Education for National Efficiency' Athlone Press) (p.44). Webb managed to persuade the Conservative Government in 1903 not to break up London into boroughs "unduly dominated by the elementary schoolteachers thanks to their disproportionate representation on borough councils". This has similarities to B. Webb, "professional egoism in the teacher which tends to impair the social value of his service". Sept. 25, 1915 New Statesman.
13. Webb, p.8.
14. Access and scholarships nearer to Webb's ideas at turn of century. Simon, (65), p.206-7; p.238; p.253-4.
15. Webb, p.9.
16. Webb, p.13. Webb was a friend of Haldane.
17. The 'Teacher in Politics' is a direct application to teachers of the general theory outlined by Sydney and Beatrice Webb in 'The History of Trade Unionism' (1894 & 1920) (Longmans). They had great faith in Labour's ability to harness the astounding post war growth in white collar unionism (the black-coated proletariat) and to direct these associations of producers into a direct participation in management and towards a reconstruction of society. Webb's part in drafting 'Labour and the New Social Order' was to appeal directly to the brainworkers and the 1920 Edition mentioned the 'considerable accession' of professionals into the Labour Party after the 1981 change in membership rules.
18. Schoolmaster, April 21, 1917.

19. Schoolmaster, April 21, 1917.
20. Holton B. (1976) 'British Syndicalism 1900-1914' Pluto.  
The relationship between syndicalism and guild socialism is discussed in Holton, R.J. 'Syndicalist Theories of the State' in Sociological Review, Vol. 28, No. 1, 1980.
21. Also, in the writings of G.D.H. Cole (e.g. 'The World of Labour' 1918, Bell 4th Ed. 1919), and the journal, The Guildsman.
- 22.. G.D.H. Cole (1966 Ed.) 'A Short History of the Brit. Working Class Movement 1789-1947' Allen & Unwin, p. 405.  
Glass, S.T. (1966) 'The Responsible Society - The Ideas of English Guild Socialism', Longmans.
23. Cole, (1920) 'Chaos and Order in Industry' Methuen, p.52 and this point is made in Wright, A.W. (1979) 'G.D.H. Cole and Socialist Democracy', Clarendon Press, p.87.
24. Cole (1920), p.48.
25. Cole (1920), p.48.
26. Cole (1920), p.235.
27. Cole (1920), p.235.
28. Cole (1920), p.236.
29. Cole 'Word of Labour' p. 363.
30. Cole (1920) 'Guild Socialism - Restated' Parsons, p.39.
31. Cole (1920) p.99 *ibid*.
32. Cole (1920), p.100, *ibid*.
33. Cole Chaos and Order, p.54.
34. See Chapter 9 (mentioned by Cole in 'Guild Socialism Restated').
35. William Howard 'The Unrest Amongst Teachers' Socialist Review, Jan/Mar. 1920.
36. A.S. Neill (1916) 'A Dominies Log', Herbert Jenkins.

37. Neill quotes Wells statement about teachers - 'The most creative profession of all' from 'New Worlds for Old'.
38. Neill, p.102 ibid.
39. Neill, p.124 ibid.
40. Neill, p.124 ibid.
41. Neill, p.133 ibid.
42. Neill, p.133 ibid.
43. Neill, p.92 ibid.
44. Neill, p.105 ibid.
45. Neill, p.125 ibid. Neill continued this argument in 'A Dominie Dismissed' (1917) Herbert Jenkins, about the Guild, the 'polite Trade Union' ('blackleg proof') but he always recognised the teacher as a servant of capitalism. The Guild would break their relationship. He was aware also that in a strike the teachers would need to align themselves with the citizens.
46. Howard, W. (1920). Unrest amongst Teachers. Socialist Review, March 1920.
47. The I.L.P. was an active Socialist component of the Labour Party and with its paper The Labour Leader was a supporter of the National Guilds League.
48. Howard, 'Unrest Amongst Teachers'.
49. Howard, 'Unrest Amongst Teachers'.
50. Howard, 'Unrest Amongst Teachers'.
51. Jenkins, C. and Sherman, B. (1979) 'White Collar Unionism' RKP, p.28.
52. G.W. Thomson 'Organisation among Non-manual workers' in G.D.H. Cole 'British Trade Unionism Today' (Ed. 1979) Gollancz.

53. G. W. Thomson, p.479.
54. Thomson, A. 'The Large and Generous View'. The Debate on Labour Affiliation in the Canadian Civil Service 1918-1928' in Labour/Le Travailleur Vol. 2, 1977, Toronto.  
MacLeod, R&K 'The Contradictions of Professionalism: Scientists, Trade Unionism and the 1st World War' in Social Studies of Science, Vol. 9, pt. 1, 1979, Sage.
55. MacLeods, p.21.
56. MacLeods, p.21.
57. Originally part of the Fabian Society, in 1919, closely associated with the TUC and Labour Party. Cole, p.342. (1966 Ed.)  
A Short History of the W/C Movement.
58. MacLeods, p.22.
59. MacLeods, p.22.
60. F. Matthews, "The Ladder of Becoming A.R. Orage and A.J. Pentty and The Origins of Guild Socialism in England" in Martin D. and Rubinstein D. (Ed.) (1979) Ideology and the Labour Movement', Croom Helm, p.165.
61. Tawney (1921), p.161. Fantana, 1964.
62. W. MacDonald (1923). 'The Intellectual Worker', Cape.
63. MacDonald, p.60.
64. MacDonald, p.251.
65. MacDonald, p.252.

8. THE NATIONAL UNION OF TEACHERS AND THE LABOUR PARTY

The tormented relations between the organised labour movement, in local Trades and Labour Councils, in trade unions and the Independent Labour Party, and the organised teachers were always uneven, disjointed and shifting. It varied between the good personal relations of socialists, appeals by the Union to the parents of the elementary schoolchild or theoretical support by the new syndicalist or industrial union wing of labour, combined with a cultural distrust of teachers and their ways. Yet in an uneven development, the NUT and elements of the working class were drawing together from 1900 onwards in a natural alliance. Each partner in the alliance, consciously or unconsciously, recognised that their needs could only be met in the alliance. The demand for a new free education system with good facilities, medical inspections and a meal service on the part of the socialists of the ILP, the new industrial unions (like the Gasworkers) and the labour reformers needed the support of the teachers. In return, the demand of the teachers for a better education system with a freer curriculum, salary scales for its staff and less direct intervention by ratepayers and the Board of Education needed the power of organised labour to assist them in obtaining it. But this was not just a steady movement of two powerful forces in a logical step by step programme. On both sides there was resistance.<sup>1</sup> Particular versions of non-political professional conduct or explicit ideas on class struggle and class education or against white collar workers kept the two sides in a tentative embrace. In the union grassroots in the urban and industrial areas that were being revitalised by new socialist ideas of industrial power, single trade unions and social progress, such as in the coalfields of South Wales and the North East or in fast-growing

urban developments in the Black Country or in areas of developing Labour representation on councils, there was a steady collaboration with the organised workers, usually in trades councils or ILP meetings. During strikes or disputes, on one side or the other, sympathetic support helped to seal these alliances.

The creation of this alliance, tentative though it was, was noticed by social observers like W. R. Lawson (in 1908) but during the Salaries Campaign, before and after the World War, it became a major topic for discussion in The Times, in its own editorials, or in reports of speeches by H.A.L. Fisher, the President of the Board of Education. A developing position by the Board towards the teachers can be ascertained in the new ideas of Fisher on the education service as a necessary social service and teachers as apolitical, responsible professionals. These ideas met head on in the columns of The Times and the Schoolmaster, when the teachers had a referendum on alliance with the Labour Party in 1917, with the general drift towards the Labour Party which this heralded. The issue involved the question of teachers' perceived class identity, the subversiveness to the state of the socialist teacher and the creation of a new teacher identity by the State. In many ways, the Labour Party referendum was not just about joining a Labour Party but on the relations between the teachers and the State. It was a watershed in the employer-employee structural relations between the teachers, the local government and central government which took place in a revolutionary period and one which saw the State intervening in the realm of public service more and more.

The political ferment of the pre-War period and its appeal to teachers has been noted. The ideas of new unionism, socialism and feminism changed the teachers and the Union. Partington mentions that the suffragette teachers were organising meetings throughout the country

and proposing bitterly opposed motions at teachers' meetings and NUT conferences. One of this group, Teresa Billington Greig, a Manchester headmistress, became the first National Organizer for the Independent Labour Party.<sup>2</sup> More and more socialist and progressive movements involved teachers, often in leadership roles. John Maclean, a Glasgow schoolteacher, had joined the Social-Democratic Federation in 1902 and in the next twenty years became the leading Scottish Marxist for most of that time while still working as a teacher.<sup>3</sup> James Maxton joined the Independent Labour Party in 1904 when he was a schoolteacher, became a leading speaker for the Educational Institute of Scotland between 1906 and 1910 and later, a 'Red Clydeside' M.P.<sup>4</sup> Tom Higdon, in the little village of Burston could describe himself and his wife as

"active, propagandist socialist teachers - with a Parish Council reforming democrat and Labourers' Union agitator to boot",<sup>5</sup>

and there is no doubt of the fraternity felt for them by the Labour movement, locally and nationally. Schoolteachers joined the Workers' Educational Association, from its foundation, as tutors,<sup>6</sup> as they also did the Plebs League (e.g. G. R. Coxon in the North East and W.G. Cove and Gwen Ray Evans in the Rhondda).

Teachers had been involved with the Fabian Group since the 1890's, in common with other white collar self-made professions.<sup>7</sup> Indeed the existence of such a large group of white collar workers led Webb and Shaw to refer to them by a series of descriptive phrases — intellectual proletariat or blackcoated or professional proletariat. This group of workers became the basis on which the Fabian ideas on societal reorganisation was based. Although the educational ideas of Sydney Webb may have been elitist and foresaw a future education system that was selective and considerably different to that proposed by the new socialist unionists,<sup>8</sup> it was the approach to this new 'salaried' class



and the responsibilities described for it that must have attracted the teachers. Webb saw professionalism not as a philosophy of selfish individualism but as a social ethos that was opposed to purely monetary incentives. Professionalism was a service ethic that could be used in the particular vision of socialist reconstruction that the Webbs created. Hobsbawm has described this key element of Fabianism and its attraction to teachers and white collar workers as

"The assumption that middle class professionals would play a much greater part than the working class in achieving socialism, that they themselves would be among its beneficiaries, and indeed that their way of life anticipated it".<sup>9</sup>

This element was to surface later in Beatrice Webb's interest in teacher unionism and Sydney Webb's Fabian pamphlet on 'The Teacher in Politics' (1918). Another aspect of the membership by teachers of the Fabian Society was the chance to meet or hear speakers such as Bernard Shaw or H.G. Wells, or Alfred Orage (the Leeds ex-schoolteacher, editor of New Age and an exponent of guild socialism). The close relations between the Fabians and the Independent Labour Party before the War meant that these Fabian speakers or ideas were available to a wider audience of teachers through lecture tours of ILP branches, cooperative societies and trades council meetings, and the Fabian tract and book service.<sup>10</sup>

More significant than individual socialist teachers was the new alliance on education between the organised representatives of labour and the Union. Collaboration between local associations and trades councils was common though cases of the associations joining the trades councils were rarer. In Swindon, the local District Teachers' Association worked closely with the trades council in School Board elections, for the 1902 Education Bill right through to the 1918 Education Bill in meetings, yet a delegate to the trades council could still say "...while standing outside they ask for help, would it not be

more profitable to join.....?<sup>11</sup>

Clinton mentions the trades councils' eagerness to help schoolteachers yet their lack of success with the NUT was not reflected in the other associations —

"more success attended efforts to persuade the Class Teachers' Association and the National Union of Uncertificated Teachers to join, then the trades councils took up their separate grievances, and at Liverpool, it was said that the Trades and Labour Council played some part in recruitment to the teaching unions".<sup>12</sup>

This was the tone of the Daily Herald also - support for the teachers but increasingly short-tempered with their wavering position in the class war.

The close connection between the small National Union of Uncertificated Teachers (formed in 1913), mainly women teachers, and the trades councils was mentioned by J. Battle of the Operative Cotton Spinners at the 1919 TUC Conference —

"[The NUT] has never seen fit, so far, to apply for affiliation to this Congress nor have they joined the Labour Party. On the other hand, the National Union of Schoolteachers [The old National Union of Uncertificated Teachers] is affiliated to this Congress, and they are also associated with the Labour and Trades Councils".<sup>13</sup>

The political militancy of the teachers and its close connection to the organised Labour movement seems to have come then, apart from individual converts, from the lower ranks of the teachers in and outside the Union and the organised town and city union branches of the NUT.

The tendency for the Union to see itself as the craft union, as an elite of trained teachers, waiting for state recognition seems, while never disappearing, to come under attack during the salaries campaign and the deterioration of working conditions in the war. Many of the same problems that affected industry affected teachers in the war, and teachers might refer to conditions in other areas of employment, besides teaching, when discussing their own claims.

The rising cost of living before the war affected all workers and changing work conditions in the war seemed to have parallels within teaching ; for instance, on the question of dilution of skilled labour, demarcation disputes and the breakdown of work practices. The gradual intervention of the State in industry and employment was accelerated by the War and soon national wage councils and national work agreements in industries were common.

In education, increased work demands on teachers were caused not just by the exigencies of war and the obligations of patriotism, but by the local authority economies. Education at the beginning of the war seems to have nearly broken down. Asher Tropp in a passing comment, says

"[The war] involved the withdrawal from school of over half the male teachers, and many of the women teachers and the virtual cessation of the recruitment of men into the profession. To take their place, retired teachers, married women who had previously been teachers, and even clergymen were encouraged to teach during the emergency. Many of the schools and training colleges were taken over for use as billets for the troops, hospitals.... the strictly 'educational' work of the schools suffered from the amount of time devoted to war savings, school gardens and allotments, the collection of wild fruits and horse chestnuts..."<sup>14</sup>

As has been noted, the attempt by the London County Council to employ untrained, middle class women to fill vacancies in a city when the large majority of the teachers were previously certificated caused bitterness and active resentment. Even C.W. Crook, the Conservative president of the NUT, mentioned this in his presidential address

"[The London Education Committee] in its absurd panic at the outbreak of War in recalling teachers and children in the middle of the summer holiday, its sweating of supply teachers and its serious reduction of staff under the specious plea of redistribution have seriously impaired the efficiency of its schools..."<sup>15</sup>

Teachers had little control over these 'dilutees' but they resisted them and the education cuts. Perhaps it was then that the NUT began to recognise that cheap female labour was not to be ignored, as it would

destroy unionisation and the NUT if it was not organised. Other unions in industry changed their anti-female policy to protect their own wage rates, this led to a rise in the average wages paid to women workers.<sup>16</sup> The annual reports of the NUT from 1913 onwards were filled with lists of local areas that had petitioned, disputed or changed local salaries or later, war bonuses for men and women. The local associations in their fights for bonuses or over work conditions looked for allies locally. The Daily Herald constantly refers to the sympathetic help offered by the local Labour movements and the joint meetings held. The Independent Labour Party Conference in 1916 made "an emphatic protest against the actions of many Education Authorities in curtailing expenditure on education".<sup>17</sup>

The salaries campaign, the war, the influence of socialist and trade union ideas, all brought the NUT into an informal, undeclared alliance with the Labour movement. This alliance had become more than the identity of interests Beatrice Webb had noted -

"in more ways than one the NUT has identified itself with the needs of the wage-earning class family and with the educational aspirations of the most enlightened of the manual workers"<sup>18</sup>

It was now a search for a social and political identity for teachers which increasingly looked towards Labour arguments and example.

A central figure in this move to the Labour Party was Alderman Michael Conway, the President of the Bradford NUT. He was not only a significant factor in the referendum to join the Labour Party but he was known as the representative of a local authority, Bradford, where an alliance of teachers and organised labour had created great improvements in the education service. It was not some distant socialist future he represented but the practical improvements that were possible immediately.

Conway was a leading member in Yorkshire of the Independent Labour Party.<sup>19</sup> From the time of the School Boards, the ILP had fought, through its representatives, for a better education system for children and teachers. In Bradford, the ILP member of the School Board was Margaret McMillan and her influence on Bradford, the ILP and teachers was strong.<sup>20</sup> She became the pioneer in Bradford and elsewhere of school clinics, nurses and baths and the founder of a school meals service.<sup>21</sup> Within the ILP, at the national conferences, and in the Labour Party, these practical policies were influential, especially when addressed by McMillan herself.<sup>22</sup>

The school meal service was run by Bradford teachers, who looked after the health of children and the dining halls.<sup>23</sup> This was the kind of action that the teachers in Bradford were capable of taking because of their power within the labour alliance. The Bradford teachers had organised their own Bradford Teachers' Association, as a local rival to the NUT, some time previously. This Association had a policy, developed from the ILP, of having teacher representation on the City Council. They avoided the problem that teachers were forbidden by law to serve as elected representatives on a council which employed them, by financing a scheme whereby a teacher could leave school and have his or her salary paid for by other teachers to allow them to stand for election.<sup>24</sup> The Secretary of the Bradford Teachers' Association and its first elected Council Member was the ILP member, Michael Conway.<sup>25</sup> It later merged with the NUT.

It was no coincidence that the Bradford Charter, calling for 'universal, free, compulsory, secondary education' and including higher salaries for teachers and better medical and sports facilities, came from a meeting called by Bradford Trades Council, nor that Conway was a Trades Council delegate, nor that it would be adopted by the ILP

conference in 1917 (and the 1917 Labour Party Conference).<sup>26</sup>

The issue of a Labour Party alliance was bound up with the renewed salaries campaign, after 1916, as the 'industrial' militants in the NUT were also prominent national or local Labour workers. The rank and file of the Union, in many local associations, was pushing hard in 1917 for a more active policy in the Union for strike action, and the issue of a Labour alliance was inextricably interwoven with this movement.

In 1917, a demand was made of the Executive that a Special Conference be called on salaries; although willing to allow a session at the Easter Conference, they did not agree to a special conference. The demand in the local associations, promoted in particular by Grimsby was that the old salary policy of 'memorials, deputations and conferences' was insufficient - they proposed that the Union scale of salaries be implemented nationally by a system of government grants to each local authority.

A meeting was called on January 13th, 1917 at Birmingham and representatives of 230 local associations were present.<sup>27</sup> It proposed a number of resolutions on the supply of teachers, the Union scale and the Board of Education, and a deputation to the Board. It also raised questions about the strength of the sustentation fund and most significantly, asked that the Executive should seek affiliation with the local and national labour movement.<sup>28</sup> This last point caused some excitement in the Press - and seemed to act as a spur for the creation of alternative possibilities by H.A.L. Fisher and The Times Educational Supplement.<sup>29</sup> In its Trade Union and Labour Notes, The Daily Herald commented —

"The interests of the teachers in publicly-owned schools are absolutely identical with those of the wage-earners, and we hope that the NUT will see the need of following the lead of this semi-official conference by initiating a national salaries campaign and by linking up once and for all with the Trade Union Movement.<sup>30</sup>

The NUT Executive received a deputation from the Birmingham conference to discuss the resolutions passed. The Meeting was polite but the deputation was forceful - demanding rather than asking. Distrust was expressed at the actions of the Executive on salaries - they had acted under the righteous guise of patriotism when the rest of the workers had pay rises two years before. Mr. Tasker, speaking for the resolution on the sustentation fund and Labour affiliation, had two main arguments. Firstly, that

"they should take a lesson from the miners, the cotton operatives, the engineers, and the railway people but the first thing they had to do was to build up a sustentation fund.<sup>31</sup>

Secondly, he made a clear distinction between the controlling classes of the education system and the schools for the worker's child. The previous neglect of the education of the workers' children and the forward, progressive policy the Labour movement was promoting for educational reform made it clear who the teachers' natural allies were: "...it was unanimously agreed that teachers had more in common with the workers than any other party..."<sup>32</sup> In discussion with the Executive after his speech, Mr. Tasker further explained the views of the Birmingham meeting - that affiliation was a vital and pressing task for the NUT; that strong measures were needed; that a trade union policy had to be thought out not drifted into —

"If you refer to the history of all Trade Unions you will find that they first of all build up their organisation, and then choose their own time for fighting. They do not fight when it suits the masters, but when convenient to themselves. We must formulate our strong measures, and as soon as we feel ready and fit for fighting, with all our machinery well planned; then we should launch out;"<sup>33</sup>

That this deputation unsettled the Executive can be seen in its resolve at the meeting (on February 3rd) to adopt a motion to the effect that a Special Committee of the Executive be appointed to consider for future policy whether

"a) to become with the development of the work of the Teacher's Registration Council, a self-governing profession  
b) to become a branch of the Civil Service c) to affiliate with the Labour Party without the surrender of our political freedom d) to affiliate completely with the Labour Party, involving the limitation of political representation within that party".<sup>34</sup>

Generally it appears that the Executive felt that teaching was in a state of flux, that decisions had to be made about future policy straight-away, and that they should not just drift along. Each of the options were discussed briefly and questions about their mutual exclusiveness was asked. It was felt by one speaker that a self-governing profession and Labour affiliation [(a) and (c)] were not alternatives but could be a single policy.

A meeting of Local and County Associations was held in the Memorial Hall, London on the 11/12 April, 1917. The affiliation motion was moved. One of the chief proponents of the affiliation, G.D. Bell, an executive member, spoke in favour of it with the argument that there was no difference between professionalism and trade unionism - indeed

"The medical profession was the best example of syndicalism that existed in this country."<sup>35</sup>

So there was no discrepancy between developing the Teachers' Registration Council and joining the Labour Party. C.W. Crook, a Conservative member of the Executive, produced an argument for the first time publically which he would use throughout the forthcoming debates - that is, two issues were mixed in this proposal, that of increased salaries and that of compulsory Labour Party membership. He concentrated on the issue of political freedom - nothing would be more certain to ruin the Union than



demanding Labour allegiance before joining the Union.<sup>36</sup> A referendum was proposed and passed.

At the Executive meeting on the 8th September, 1917, the report of the Special Committee was studied, in the form of a memorandum to be distributed to each member. The disputes between the two Executive members who had begun to champion each side, Bell and Crook, continued over the working of the memorandum. Bell disputed the presence of Section II on the question of a self-governing profession, concerned mainly with the future of the Teachers' Registration Council, as it was a

,"....statement not of facts only, but contained matters of hope and opinion",<sup>37</sup>

especially on the point that the Council could establish a standard salary scale. He also objected to a Section II paragraph which implied that a political restriction or compulsion would apply after affiliation. Both complaints were lost.

Crook tried to have a section dealing with the benefits of trades council membership deleted, without success.<sup>38</sup>

The meeting got into a tangle on the issue of 'alliance' or 'affiliation' to the Labour Party. The nuances of the word were explored but it was finally decided to stay with 'alliance' as this was the Conference understanding, and a vote in favour would still allow interpretation by the Executive.

In the weeks following the publication and circulation of the memorandum the correspondence columns of the Schoolmaster were regularly filled with arguments for and against the Labour Party alliance and rarely concerned with the question of civil service status.

Four groups of writers regularly supported the alliance option; the country teachers, the changed voter, Labour Party educational policy supporters and the Teachers' Labour League. Several letters came from

country areas, like Shropshire and Cornwall, complaining of the penury the present Union policy had not altered —

"there are tens of thousands of teachers up and down the country, and many even in this remote corner, who for a long time past have been dissatisfied with the lack of vigour shown by our leaders".<sup>39</sup>

A few letters mentioned the change of political allegiances amongst teachers due to the educational crisis. 'Pity' said

"my pre-war political opinions would have prevented consideration of the suggested Union with the Labour Party but now I shall certainly vote for it, in order that we may use the only weapon, force, that will cause this wealthy Metropolitan County Authority to treat its teachers with justice..."<sup>40</sup>

'Ground Ginger' agreed with 'Pity',

"....after the treatment we have suffered at the hands of one or another I am now a 'Labourite' and I am anxious for the time to come to record my vote as such".<sup>41</sup>

Others like 'Simplex' asked what benefits the Union ever received from past Conservative and Liberal ministers.<sup>42</sup> Maskelyne, one of the main proposers of affiliation was generally referred to as a 'life-long Conservative'.

A number of the writers referred specifically to forward Labour Party policy on education, which was sometimes referred to as 'superior to that of the NUT'.

The Teachers' Labour League, under its chairman G.D. Bell, was formed after a meeting of the Romford NUT Association, followed by a meeting of the Essex County Association and then a joint meeting of the London, Middlesex and Essex Committees on the Salaries Campaign in 1917. Its purpose was to raise the issue of Labour Party affiliation, and although it did not propose the referendum, it was campaigning hard in favour of affiliation. Its principles lay in the recognition that capital and labour interests were not identical, that landlords and

capitalists exploit the workers and that teachers teach the children of the working class in the elementary schools.<sup>43</sup> A member of the TLL, Corlett, from Stretford, illustrates these principles at length

"...capitalist politics are venal from top to bottom. Everywhere money is supreme, purchasing men and politics as it purchases any other marketable commodities.... Those who control funds control politics, and it is because of this basic fact that we urge teachers to drop the scales from their eyes and see where they really stand.... All our bonuses and grants do little to assist us, since those who control compel us to pay for them ourselves, seeing that they control productions.... We suggest affiliation with the Labour Party because we believe that if we are to live we must act as a body, and only by combined political action can we obtain economic freedom".<sup>44</sup>

Crook did not attempt to fight this economic analysis but to separate it from the question of Labour Party affiliation. Crook concentrated on the future infringement, by affiliation, of the two main features of the NUT's policy; in his opinion, they were the protection of the freedom of religious and political thought. The Union had

"succeeded by aloofness....from all parties and have obtained our improvements by the strength of our case, and not by throwing the whole of our weight into any one political caucus."<sup>45</sup>

Crook usually argued that individuals, such as Sir James Yoxall, who was the General Secretary of the Union and a Liberal M.P. (for West Nottingham), who would be placed in a ludicrous position — excluded from the counsels of the affiliated Union.

He also argued that a profession allied to the Labour Party, or any single party, could cause parental difficulties on the neutrality of its teaching. Finally, he mentioned the unpatriotic nature of the proposal to affiliate when thousands of teachers were still at the war front unable to vote.

Other writers echoed the belief in the traditional independence of the Union, the gains this had brought but also the patriotic nationalism sustained by the teachers in a time of war. Education is often treated by these writers as a calling, above politics and on a 'high plane', yet they are usually right-wing or Conservatives. The attainment of true professionalism, a state equated with the 'recognised' professions, would be harmed by affiliation, even though, as one writer says:

"we shall lose financially by standing aloof from the Labour Movement."<sup>46</sup>

A variation on this theme was the promotion of a united profession which could demand control over its work and therefore higher payments - unity was the key.

A note of blackmail was inferred in Crook's letters by other writers - a reference to the possibility that a substantial proportion of the Union would not accept a note for affiliation and leave the Union.

Many local associations in the weeks preceding the vote held meetings where the pros and cons of the issue were discussed, usually with the help of visiting speakers.<sup>47</sup> Bell, Conway and Maskelyne spoke at meetings throughout the country and the Teachers' Labour League posted pamphlets to teachers.<sup>48</sup> Most of the meetings did not resolve the issue though both the Lancaster and Southwark meetings were reported in the Schoolmaster as opposing affiliation.

A clearly reported Leicester NUT meeting can be taken as an example of the arguments used. Alderman Michael Conway from Bradford spoke for the affiliation and T. Taylor, the Mayor of Stourbridge and an NUT Executive member, spoke against. Conway made a distinction between the opportunistic Union policy in the past and the trend toward combination - its demands were not enforceable -

"The NUT had been living on aspirations for a long time. In Bradford there were 40,000 organised workers behind the teachers when they made a move and they were getting today the largest bonus in the country and had been getting it for eighteen months."<sup>49</sup>

He also said that teachers were from the working class and the Labour programme on education was superior to that of the NUT. He proposed that

"The first step to be adopted was affiliation with the Local Trades Council and getting rid of the idea that the teachers were too snobbish to ally themselves with other workers. The next step was to recommend the NUT Executive to affiliate with the Trades Union Congress and leave the question of affiliation with the Labour Party for political action for a future time".<sup>50</sup>

Mr. Taylor made three main points. Firstly, that teachers were not like railwaymen - their strikes did not paralyse. The NUT had therefore been as successful as possible in the circumstances. Secondly, that the fine Labour education programme was merely a vote-catcher: the rank and file were still backward on education. Thirdly, to alter the Union political policy was a policy of desperation - Labour were not yet in power.

The confusing nature of the affiliation referendum becomes clear in an analysis of the correspondence columns of the Schoolmaster and the Executive reports. The two major proposers, Bell and Maskelyne, had been forced into agreeing with a referendum after they had brought the issue up for discussion at the 1917 Easter Conference of the Union. Whitlock, a London member, had proposed the referendum believing that Bell and Maskelyne were trying to force Conference into a quick decision.<sup>51</sup> An issue then to be discussed in Conference became a national referendum, with Bell trying to convince a fairly sceptical Executive of the value of affiliation and to exclude the issue of self-governing profession or civil servant status. These two issues had been produced, under the influence of Crook, and confused the

referendum further.

Several of the writers did not feel that a self-governing profession and Labour Party affiliation were alternatives but were consistent with each other. This was not true of the Crook lobby but of the Labour sympathisers. Leah Manning, on behalf of the Cambridge Class Teacher Association, said

"...it seemed to our members that affiliation with that Party which would secure for the Union a political backing ought to help towards that end."<sup>52</sup>

or, again, G.F. Johnson from Norwich

"the affiliation with the Labour Party will mean that the NUT can become a self-governing profession."<sup>53</sup>

It was not clear to members the distinction, if any, to be made between 'affiliation' or 'alliance'; between labour movement and Labour Party, and between local Trades and Labour Councils and the National Labour Party. Indeed in Executive discussions, these distinctions were not observed. Alderman Conway, in his speech (note 50) distinguishes between the Trades and Labour Council, the TUC and the Labour Party. Crook and the lobby supporting him never distinguished these three aspects of the labour movement and discussed the issue mainly in terms of compulsory political control over members of the Labour Party.<sup>54</sup>

It seems to be an ill-thought out campaign sprung on its main proposers, who in turn were affected by the practical swing to Labour and Trades Councils in the latter stages of the war, and wished to discuss it further at conference.

At the same time, the Labour Party was changing its membership requirements - allowing individual membership not just membership through affiliated socialist societies or unions. This, referred to by the correspondents, seemed to make the outcome of the referendum redundant.<sup>55</sup>

Also Fisher's Education Bill was moving through its Parliamentary readings with great interest publically and in the House. The future role of the teacher and the importance of education was continually discussed, not least by Fisher. Although no direct reference was made by Fisher to the internal debate on Labour Party affiliation, it is clear that he stood for a new role for the teacher and represented a new policy on education from the State. Fisher referred constantly to his fellow teachers, promising them

"the establishment on a sound basis of an efficient and devoted corps of teachers as a public necessity, less obvious perhaps, but no less imperative than the maintenance of the fighting forces of the Crown".<sup>56</sup>

His call for a "noble and dignified teaching profession"<sup>57</sup> was echoed by the new Times Educational Supplement which preached a similar ideology. In one of a series of calls throughout 1917, for a new profession, unified around the Teachers' Registration Council, the Times Educational Supplement argued a position very similar to Crook and the NUT anti-Labour Party lobby.<sup>58</sup>

"What is needed is a profession as firmly based in popular estimation as the medical and legal professions.... a profession it must be, open in all its branches to talent, character and personality, and it must offer something more than a bare living wage to its humblest member."<sup>59</sup>

Again, in the following month, the Times Educational Supplement said

"so important do we regard that unification at the present time, when we are on the verge of a great national system, that we do not hesitate to make an urgent appeal to all teachers who have the interests of the nation at heart to place their names on the Register".<sup>60</sup>

Similar statements were made during the public debate about the new Education Bill, including this statement in Parliament from Ramsay MacDonald:

"...psychological as well as economic steps must be taken to improve education. They might fix a salary at a thousand a year and yet not produce the good teacher or stimulate the teacher to make himself thoroughly efficient, unless they made work in the elementary school, interesting, dignified and invested it with a certain amount of glory..."<sup>61</sup>

The revival of the idea of teaching as a vocation, a profession, became the consistent call of The Times, its Supplement and Fisher with support from the Conservatives within the NUT, just at the time when the NUT was considering a possible radical alternative. Why should this be so?

It is obvious in reading the educational press in 1917 and 1918, that radical changes were being demanded of the education system not just by the Labour movement and the teachers, but by the employers and the State.

Fisher talked of a new relationship between the schools and the business world, of the new extended franchise and the new education for citizenship. This new Act would have been endangered by an alliance between the organised Labour movement and teachers, as it would by the conditions in which teachers worked in most parts of the country. As the Schoolmaster commented on the Fédération of British Industries Report on Education: "...teachers should be prohibited from taking part in a political or similar organisation. We wonder why!"<sup>62</sup>

The disturbed teacher was a threat to the new educational needs of the State.

The result of the referendum was reported at the Easter Conference of the NUT. Out of ninety-seven thousand members, over forty-thousand did not vote. For affiliation, 15,434 - against 29,743.

The growing feeling that an alliance with labour was a natural alliance, that it would help to strengthen the union salary campaign and improve state education was confused by the poor wording of the



referendum proposal, the resurgence of State intervention in education, and the steady pressure of the Conservative Press.

Perhaps the sharpest comment made about the affair was by an ex-teacher in Castleford, Yorkshire, who had previously written to the Schoolmaster about the imprisonment of John Maclean -

"If they (the pro-labourites) had any intelligence they would perceive that it is not the Labour Party which helps the miners or the railwaymen but the miners and railwaymen who bolster up the Labour Party .... If teachers are such fools that they cannot initiate a fighting policy of their own, they will not do any good by acting as deadweights in a party machine which has no intelligence..."<sup>63</sup>

The whole affair, while very revealing about the state of mind of teachers at the time, seems an irrelevance in their struggle for better salaries and work conditions. Both the benefits of the Teachers' Registration Council or the benefits of an NUT Labour Party membership were soon to be forgotten in the strikes for better salaries and their defence of a national agreement. The Labour Party certainly benefited from teacher membership as individuals in the following years.

The Referendum illustrates the contention that teachers were not just searching for a so-called professional identity; that they did not necessarily oppose professionalism and working class solidarity; that they were attracted to labour and socialist ideas. Even if they did not align themselves with the Labour movement as a unified group, many teachers became involved in the Labour Party and socialist politics or treated the Labour Party as the party of education. It was a watershed for the teachers' social and political identity as a group.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER 8

1. For instances, Lib/Lab M.P.'s and other Conservative Labour supports were accused of being apathetic about educational reform. Note Schofield, J. 'The Labour Movement and Educational Policy 1900-1931' M.Ed. Manchester (1964), p.714.
2. Partington, op.cit. p.10.
3. Bell, T. (1944) 'John Maclean, A Fighter for Freedom', C. P. Scotland.
4. Milton, N. (Ed.) (1978) 'In the Rapids of Revolution', Allison & Busby, London.
5. Middlemas, R.V. (1965), 'The Clydesiders - a left-wing struggle for Parliamentary Power', Hutchinson.
6. Higdon, T. 'The Burston Rebellion', Nat. Labour Press.
7. Mansbridge, A. (1920) 'An Adventure in Working Class Education', Longmans.
8. Hobsbawm, E.S. (1964) 'Labouring Men, Studies in the History of Labour' Weidenfeld & Nicholson, p.257/8.
9. Simon (65), p. 202-206.
10. Hobsbawm, p.259. Mackenzie, N. & J. (1977) 'The First Fabians' Weidenfeld & Nicholson, p.343.
11. Mackenzie, p.235.
12. Tuckett, Angela (1971) 'Up with all that's down' (History of Swindon trades council) Swindon p.39.
13. Clinton, A. (1977) 'The Trade Union Rank and File - Trades Councils in Britain 1900-1940', March Univ. Press, p.25.

The Liverpool Trades Council & ILP had an advanced programme of educational reform (clinics, canteens, etc.) based on ILP policies and with the example of Bradford. This must have

12. encouraged local teachers. [Fidler, G. 'Labour and  
(Contd.) Children: Labour Agitation for the health and welfare  
of school children in Liverpool c. 1905-1920 in 'Labour  
and Education' History of Education Society Occasional Publication  
No. 6, 1981.]  
  
Stockport NUT voted to join the local Trades Council in June  
1917 by 83:17 votes.  
  
[Campaigne, H. (1970) 'Short History of the Stockport NUT  
1871-1970' Stockport NUT.]  
  
Pembroke County Association had been invited to send four  
teacher delegates to a proposed Labour council meeting at  
Havefordwest in June 1916. They then had a special meeting  
to consider this invitation at which a delegate from the local  
Trades Council described its education policy, and voted to  
join by 22:9 votes. The President of the Pembroke Teachers  
Association was made President of the new Pembroke Labour  
Party. The membership of the Association did not fall and there  
was concerted moved to create an Education Consultative Council  
with the LEA. For unknown reasons, disaffiliation came in 1921.  
[Pembroke County Minute Book 1913-1920.]
13. TUC Annual Report 1919.
14. Tropp, op.cit. p.208.
15. NUT Annual Report 1916.
16. Drake, B. (1929) 'Women in Trade Unions' Labour Research  
Department/Allen & Unwin.
17. Simon (65),
18. Webb, B. 'Supplement on Teachers' Organisations' in  
New Statesman, Sept. 25, 1915.

19. That the ILP had an attraction for teachers can be shown by reseach into the shareholders of the ILP newspapers. Both the Woolwich Pioneer and the Merthyr Pioneer had representation from teachers in appreciable numbers. Hopkin, D. 'The membership of the Independent Labour Party 1904-1910' in International Review of Social History, Vol. XX, 1975.
20. Simon (65) McMillan had been elected in 1894 during a large public campaign, in which she was at the forefront, against half-time education.
21. Simon (65) Her interests in education were based on provision for the healthy child but included the curriculum, teacher training etc.
22. Simon (65), p. 284/5.
23. Simon, (65), p. 284n.
24. Bradford, E.C. (1970) 'Education in Bradford since 1870', Bradford, p.232.
25. Conway became NUT President in 1924 and Lord Mayor in 1927. He was to be a member of the Labour Party Advisory Committee on education created in 1918 and chaired by F. W. Coldstone (the Labour MP and later Secretary of the NUT).
26. The strong links between Bradford trade unions, the Trades Council and the ILP is explained and described in Reynolds, J. and Laybourn, K. 'The Emergence of the Independent Labour Party in Bradford' in International Review of Social History, Vol. XX, 1975.
27. Approximately 45,000 teachers.
28. Schoolmaster, Feb. 10, 1917, p.172.

29. The Times Educational Supplement, Jan. 25. 'A Trade Union for Education' - unity of all educators interests.  
The Times Educational Supplement, March 1 'To my fellow teachers'  
H.A.L. Fisher - teachers as an important group - teachers as important as defence.
30. Daily Herald, Jan. 27, 1917. This issue had begun to appear in the Schoolmaster correspondence column and in reports of local salary meetings.
31. Schoolmaster, Feb. 10, 1917, p.172.
32. Schoolmaster, Feb. 10, 1917, p.172.
33. Schoolmaster, Feb. 10, 1917, p.174.
34. Schoolmaster, Feb. 17, 1917, p.207.
35. Schoolmaster, April 2, 1917.
36. One of the opponents of the Bell affiliation line was a West Ham member, Whitlock - he did so as a member of the British Socialist Party and regarded unwillingly attracted teachers as a future 'drag on the wheel of the LP' Schoolmaster, April 21, 1917.
37. Schoolmaster, Sept. 15, 1917.
38. The advantages were mainly educational not industrial.
39. Schoolmaster, Nov. 24, 1917. Radcliffe, Cornwall.
40. Schoolmaster, Nov. 3, 1917. 'Pity', Middlesex.
41. Schoolmaster, Dec. 1, 1917. 'Ground Ginger'.
42. Schoolmaster, Dec. 8, 1917. 'Simplex'. A letter from John Megins, Bethnal Green, March 23, 1918.  
"As a life-long Liberal and a Liberal agent, I welcome the suggestion of alliance with the L.P. because after deep thought I appreciate that Liberal and Conservatism have done precious little for education....it is Labour, and Labour along that will ultimately give us a new social order".

43. Schoolmaster, Nov. 17, 1917. Bell.
44. Schoolmaster, Dec. 8, 1917. Corlett.
45. Schoolmaster, Nov. 10, 1917.
46. Schoolmaster, Dec. 15, 1917. Other writers include  
Holgate, Leeds Sept. 29 and Dec. 15th 'Justitia' Dec. 1, 1917.
47. e.g. Taunton & West Somerset Assoc. Schoolmaster, Dec. 8, 1917.  
Manchester & District Church Teachers' Association " Jan. 19, 1918  
Rock and Tenbury Association " Jan. 26, 1918.  
Birmingham Association of Women Teachers " Feb. 2, 1918.  
Exeter Association " Feb. 23, 1918.  
Cambridge Association " Feb. 23, 1918.  
Lancaster " April 6, 1918.  
Southwark " April 6, 1918 etc
48. Schoolmaster, Dec. 22, 1917 - A letter from Maskelyne mentions  
his talks at Leyton, Battersea, Croydon, Maidstone, Worthing,  
Crewe and Banbury.
49. Schoolmaster, Nov. 10, 1917.
50. Schoolmaster, Nov. 10, 1917.
51. A correspondence on this issue and the disagreements between  
these men (who are all Labour Party supporters) took place  
in the Schoolmaster: Bell (Nov. 17), Whitlock (Dec. 8) and  
Maskelyne (Dec. 22).
52. Schoolmaster, Jan. 5, 1918.
53. Schoolmaster, Jan. 19, 1918.
54. A meeting of the Executive to rule on enquiries received from  
the members on these aspects of the Referendum was held  
reported in the Schoolmaster Dec. 15, 1917.
55. A move recognised by C. W. Crook as likely to have a great  
effect on the referendum outcome The Times Educational Supplement,  
Nov. 15.

56. The Times Educational Supplement, March 1, 1917.
57. The Times Educational Supplement, April, 19, 1917.
58. By 1918, C. W. Crook was a regular columnist in The Times Educational Supplement, in a section called National Union Notes.
59. The Times Educational Supplement. The Call for Teachers, Jan. 25, 1917.
60. The Times Educational Supplement, New Register, Feb. 22, 1917.
61. The Times Educational Supplement, Report of Parliament Debate on Education Bill, April 26, 1917.
62. Schoolmaster, April 13, 1918.
63. Schoolmaster, April 13, 1918. A. G. Higgins.